

BX  
8340  
H46  
1857  
GTU  
Storage







# ANALYSIS

OF THE

## Principles of Church Government:

PARTICULARLY THAT

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY REV. M. M. HENKLE, D.D.

---

Nashville, Tenn.:

PUBLISHED BY E. STEVENSON & F. A. OWEN, AGENTS,  
FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

1857.



UC/83  
H46

BX

8340

H46

1857

---

ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by

STEVENSON & OWEN, AGENTS,

In the Office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Middle District of  
Tennessee.

---

---

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY A. A. STITT,  
SOUTHERN METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE, NASHVILLE, TENN.

---

BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL

SANDFORD FLEMING LIBRARY

# Contents.

---

|                           |         |
|---------------------------|---------|
| INTRODUCTORY REMARKS..... | PAGE 15 |
|---------------------------|---------|

## CHAPTER I.

### NECESSITY AND ELEMENTARY BASIS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Christ instituted the Church, and furnished the first principles of government for it, but not details—This shown from the want of fulness, even in providing for the ministry—All details left to the discretion of the Church—This shown from analogy—from necessity—from the practice of the adverse party—What have Churches a right to do?—By whom and in what manner?—Whatsoever is necessary, and not provided for in the constitution, the Church may supply—Doctrines, morals, sacraments, and ministry are settled in the constitution; yet Churches may agree on what these are—But these determined among Protestants by Augsburg Confession, Thirty-nine Articles, Confession, etc.—Respecting moral duties, Church may determine whether an act not forbidden by *name* is prohibited by a *principle* of the constitution—Church may adopt rules of procedure for dealing with offenders, etc.—Christ has settled nothing respecting orders in the ministry, mode of authorizing, etc.—Gen-

(iii)

eral subjects of Church action, receiving members, disciplining offenders, authorizing and dismissing ministers, appointment of inferior officers, administration of Church funds..... 17

## CHAPTER II.

### RIGHTS OF THE MINISTRY IN MATTERS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Who has a right to act for the Church—This right claimed for the ministry alone by some, and for laity by others—Both theories carried to extremes—Specific grants of power made to the ministry by Jesus Christ, they are bound to maintain—Not certain that we can ascertain exact nature and extent of that investiture, but important to make the attempt—Church power antecedent to Church organization, vested in the ministry—That power to be looked for chiefly in the commission—That commission and its grants examined—Embraces making converts and receiving them into the Church—How the apostles were to receive members into the Church when as yet it was not organized—The authority implied—Subject illustrated by reference to case of officers of the government—Objection, that such a power implies that of admitting others to coöperate in it—This would not be true of their power as ambassadors, for such authority is conferable only by the supreme power—Such is the case of ministers of gospel—In what belongs distinctively to the ministry, laity may not partake—What is secondary and incidental is not so prohibited to them—Ministry existed *before* Church organizations, and have formed them—This a necessary effect of the missionary character of the gospel—Illustrated by the case of Moses—Ministry the *ecclesiastical* fountain of authority—Shown—This does not authorize them to *retain* what belongs to others—Church power in them *seminally*, not absolutely—Illustrated by case of Adam—Cases in which ministerial rule is



mentioned subsequent to the commission—Consent essential to perfect Church organization, yet Church traces lineage to a higher than human source..... 27

### CHAPTER III.

#### TRUE AND FALSE CLAIMS OF THE MINISTRY DISTINGUISHED.

Claims of the Roman Church—Of the Church of England—Apostolic Succession—No one can know himself in the *succession*—It generates illiberality—Assumes the prerogative of Christ—True succession consists in Christ appointing his own ambassadors—For this end he promised to be “*with*” them—Illustration from the rock-fountain that followed Israel—Paul not in the succession—His case considered—Inconsistency of Successionists who believe in a Divine call to the ministry—True succession consists in Christ *himself* calling a succession of the faithful men—The business of the Church to *recognize* such a call, but not to make it—Objection—Church may err in this—So she may on the other plan—An advantage of our theory over successionists..... 39

### CHAPTER IV.

#### RIGHTS OF THE LAITY CONSIDERED.

Rights claimed for laity on the ground of taxation without representation is wrong—Reply “that a free gift is not in the nature of a tax” not valid—One joins a Church voluntarily, knowing that money must be raised, and that he is expected to raise his part, yet is morally bound both to join and to contribute—Illustration from civil relation—That taxation is the basis of representation denied—Is not so in the State—Its absurdity shown—Argument of natural equality—Unsatisfactory answer to it—Reply—The argument considered—Christ *instituted* the Church, but only *recognized* civil governments as human ordinances

—Conflicting claims of *kings* and *popes*—Absurdity of their claims shown—True state of the question—Illustration—Have laity any rights?—Wrong views of this subject—What those rights are..... 48

## CHAPTER V.

RIGHTS OF MINISTRY AND LAITY JOINTLY, IN PARTICULAR ACTS—AS RECEIVING MEMBERS INTO THE CHURCH.

Rights conceded to the ministry—Preaching, etc.—Receiving members into the Church—Whether in ministry or membership—Ministers obliged to receive members on missionary fields, because no *Church* to receive them—They are required to baptize, and baptism the door of the Church—Power given to ministry to “open and shut” the door of the Church—Laity not permitted authoritative control, but may be admitted to advisory coöperation—This accords with usage of principal Churches—Presbyterian Church—Methodist Episcopal Church—English and Protestant Episcopal Churches—Members may vote on the qualifications of a candidate, but cannot compel minister to baptize him, etc.—Expediency of allowing members all proper action in the premises—Practice of Methodist Episcopal Church..... 63

## CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULAR ACTS—EXCOMMUNICATION.

Ground on which right of the ministry to excommunicate members is claimed—Not valid—Power of admission and that of excommunication different—What part the ministry justly have in this matter—Case of Paul—Refusing to *admit*, leaves one where he was—Expulsion degrades—The first power in the commission, the latter not—*This* can only take place where Churches are, *that* where none are—Cases in 1 Cor. v., and Matt. xviii.—Practice of primitive Church—

True theory—Usages of the Churches in trial of members—Episcopal—Presbyterian—Methodist Episcopal Church—Latter two compared—Lay elders—An order of ministry—Advantages of it—Proceeding in the Methodist Episcopal Church—In cases of imprudence—Of immorality—Forming the jury—Adjustment of business difficulties—Suspension and expulsion—Difference between ministers and members in relation to this—Not necessary in the instance of members..... 70

## CHAPTER VII.

### PARTICULAR ACTS—RECEIVING PERSONS INTO THE MINISTRY.

Not the actual call to ministry, but its formal acknowledgment, to be considered—Practice of apostles—Action by congregations and ministry of vicinity—By presbytery of elders—By bishops—By temporal princes—Contest between the latter two—Singular results of the controversy—Statement of the case by North British Review—Substance of these theories—Their errors—The true position—Proceeding of apostles in instituting the order of deacons—Usage of the Primitive Church—Practice of the Church of England—Of Protestant Episcopal Church—Of the Presbyterian Church—Of the Methodist Episcopal Church..... 87

## CHAPTER VIII.

### QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR THE MINISTRY.

Principal qualifications, what—Mature age—Learning—Piety—Freedom from worldly cares and a state of trial—The doctrine and practice respecting these as found in the Scriptures, the Primitive Church, the modern Churches—Methodist Episcopal Church particularly considered..... 100

## CHAPTER IX.

## PARTICULAR ACTS—APPOINTING AND REMOVING MINISTERS.

Nothing direct in the New Testament on this subject—Usage in isolated Congregational churches—In confederations of Churches—Interference of civil power—Effects of this in Church of England—Better regulations in Protestant Episcopal Church—Law and usage of Presbyterian Church—Mode of appointment different under itinerancy from that under settled pastors—Question of right as to the choice of pastor and people considered—Restrictions on every other mode of choice as well as on the itinerant plan—Such abridgment of natural right noticed as practiced in different Churches—Comparison of the two principal plans—Glance at Methodist polity in relation to this—The value of *consent* in the premises—How given in different Churches—Formal assent not required in civil governments—Direct electing of a pastor does not secure the choice of all—Different ways in which choice may be defeated—Itinerant system requires more concentration of authority than other plans..... 109

## CHAPTER X.

## PARTICULAR ACTS—DISMISSING AND EXPELLING MINISTERS.

Itinerancy providentially originated—History of its rise and establishment—The plan liberal on the part of ministers, because it imposes heaviest burdens on them—Minister bound to labor where appointed, but people not obliged to hear nor to support him—Dissatisfaction with itinerancy very limited, and chiefly confined to ministers—It gives the people a more equitable distribution of the talents of the ministry than other modes of appointment—If any are not suited,

the certainty of change reconciles them—Affords profitable and attractive variety—Other Churches adopt this mode of appointment in extraordinary cases, as missionary, etc., but what is extraordinary with others is *ordinary* in Methodist economy—Objection, that it is anti-republican; but if it were true, has God required his ministers to be appointed as town constables in the most democratic community?—Other Churches restrict the right of people's choice by presbyteries, bishops, etc., as well as Methodists do—Strict majority rule not carried out in most republican governments—Example in the military.

*Dismissing Ministers*—Different with Methodists from other Churches, because term limited, and change comes of course, while with others it usually involves a rupture and bad feeling.

*Excommunicating of Ministers*—Procedure in the Methodist Episcopal Church in case of licentiate or local preacher—In case of itinerant minister..... 124

## CHAPTER XI.

### TEMPORALITIES OF THE CHURCH.

Financial matters of the Church managed at first by the ministry, afterward by deacons—Probability that both were concerned in directing these affairs—Ancient canons on this subject—Bishops at a later time claimed the sole control—So in Papal Church now—In Protestant Churches property generally held by trustees—Methodist regulations on this subject misapprehended, and hence stated here—Houses of worship, how held—The case explained and illustrated—Funds for support of ministry and poor committed to hands of Steward—Their appointment, power, etc.—Mission fund, how raised and managed—Book fund—Its origin, object, and progress—Review of the whole ground..... 135



# CHAPTER XII.

## LAY REPRESENTATION—ON WHAT BASIS IT RESTS.

Claim to lay representation in the three departments of government—Upon what grounds this claim must rest if valid—Law of nature—Distinction between rights in a natural and in a civil state—Civil rights cannot be made the basis of ecclesiastical because distinct, concurrent, and independent, which is not true of natural and civil—What protection secured by civil and what by Christian rights—Both in a sense dependent on law of nature—What could belong to a Christian in a solitary state—Is already member of invisible Church, and has valid claim to a place in visible—Ecclesiastico-Christian rights what—General reason for claiming representation—Small sum of matters pertaining to legislative department—Executive department has always been in the hands of ministry—Notice of the part assigned to the ministry and laity in judiciary of Methodist Episcopal Church—Comparison with the judiciary of the United States—Objection that when laity recommend one for license to preach they do not vote for him as a judge considered—Objection that the voice of laity is not decisive considered—Objection that the minister has a controlling influence over the laity in the premises examined—His powers noticed in detail..... 143

# CHAPTER XIII.

## LAY REPRESENTATION—PRACTICE OF PRIMITIVE AND MODERN CHURCHES.

Representation in law-making department the chief thing contended for—New Testament silent—Case of the so-called council in Acts xv.—Church matters managed chiefly by independent congregations until about middle of second century—Next followed local or district councils, in which laity probably partici-

pated—When they became fixed and regular they were composed of the ministry—Evidence to this effect from fathers and early Church usage—Usage in Protestant Churches since the Reformation—General Synod of Church of England composed of bishops and other clergy—It declared government of Church to be in the clergy, and decreed the excommunication of such as denied that the synod was the Church *by representation*—Protestant Episcopal Church has lay delegates, but not required to be Church members, and bishops have absolute negative—Presbyterian Church represented by Ruling Elders, who are permanent officers of the Church—Church authority declared to be in officers of the Church by Church of Scotland in 1641—Confession of Faith declares it to be in overseers and other rulers—Tacit consent—Curious contention between Presbyterians and Episcopalians in Scotland in 1533 about lay rights—In none of these any direct unrestricted lay representation—No Churches place laity and ministry on equality, but make the latter an ecclesiastical aristocracy—The case illustrated—How this is reconciled with popular rights..... 158

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LAY REPRESENTATION—RESTRICTIONS, ETC.

Rule-making power of Methodist Episcopal Church in General Conference—This body composed of ministers elected by Annual Conferences—Consent of the governed gives effect to the arrangement, as in English, Scotch, Presbyterian Churches, etc., so in Methodist Episcopal Church—Consent (as respects human authority) gives effect to all law, and *tacit* consent to most, for this only in most cases is given—Instances of its withholdment by the Methodist people—The right of the laity to be represented by their pastors—Apparent satisfaction with the arrangement—Voluntary concessions made from ministry to laity—Yet

if others be safe, necessary, and scriptural, ministry should not rashly oppose—Business of General Synods—In Primitive Church—In Presbyterian Church In Methodist Episcopal Church—Restrictions on rule-making power—Chief acts of General Conference such as laity cannot properly participate in—What acts are not of this sort—Concerning Church government, four classes of subjects—First excludes ministry and laity from its control—Second admits ministry and excludes laity authoritatively—Third, laity lack the relation, etc., to qualify them for action—Fourth, laity seem equally interested and qualified as the ministry to act, and their admission to it is matter of expediency—Expediency defined—Several arguments for and against the expediency of the proposed measure—Greater concentration of power in ministerial hands in an itinerant plan of action—Chrysostom, Stillingfleet, etc., on this subject..... 174

## CHAPTER XV.

### LAY REPRESENTATION—DIFFERENT PLANS—DIFFICULTIES OF EACH, ETC., ETC.

Success of the Church without lay representation no argument on the subject; yet after operating very successfully on this plan for many years, change should not be suddenly made—Argument that the government is not suited to the present time considered—Laity could not be allowed to control what is directly committed to ministry—Change of polity dependent on expediency must consult the general desire and not contravene it, which would be anti-republican—This doctrine conceded in great controversy of 1826, etc.—General wish of the Church believed to be adverse to change—Right of the people to examine the subject—Several practical difficulties in the way of lay representation noticed—Plan of lay votes and clerical delegates noticed—Only eligible plan by separate houses—Plan of bringing lay stew-

ards into Annual Conferences favorably considered as preferable to the others—Difficulty of getting laymen to neglect their business five or six weeks to attend General Conference—Necessity of great moderation on this subject—Right of investigation conceded, but danger of excitement and bitterness—Voice of people freely given would not be unheeded—Agitations and agitators to be guarded against—Duty of ministers to “set forth quietness, peace, and love”..... 188



## Introductory Remarks.

---

THE subject of Church Government has been productive of much controversy, and, like most contested questions about which little is revealed in the Sacred Book, has been attended with no little bitterness and uncharitable feeling.

The object of the remarks now to be offered is, to ascertain, so far as practicable, the true principles of ecclesiastical polity, considered in the light of Sacred Scripture, reason, and the practice of the Christian Church in its early ages, and of the principal Protestant religious denominations since the Reformation. Having more than once been shaken off foundations which in early life he deemed solid, the writer imagines himself prepared to enter on this investigation with candor, and with a stronger desire to ascertain the way of truth and safety, than to support a favorite theory; and he has much



less expectation of proving that *his* Church is right, and all others wrong, than of clearing the fact that all the religious bodies above referred to are right in all the essential elements of ecclesiastical polity, without, however, claiming perfection for any of them.

He will probably be allowed, without imputation of bigotry, to believe that the Church to which he belongs is better organized for the fulfilment of its mission, the accomplishment of its paramount and peculiar object—the spread of Scripture holiness by the special agency of an itinerant ministry of the word—than any of the other systems of polity would be for the same end; while he deems himself not too liberal, when he admits that other systems may be better adapted to the attainment of the peculiar objects proposed by them, or may be better suited to the circumstances under which they exist, than his would be. And while he regards this *claim* as founded on simple truth and justice, he is willing that the *concession* should occupy the same ground.

# Analysis of Church Government

---

## CHAPTER I.

### NECESSITY AND ELEMENTARY BASIS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

I SUPPOSE it will be generally conceded, that Christ established a Church on the earth, and that it was intended to be permanent and perpetual.

So much being granted, it must follow, either, (1.) that he intended his Church to be without regular government, or, (2.) that he has laid down and plainly defined the polity by which his Church is to be governed, or, (3.) that he has made in the Church the necessary investiture of authority for settling all the details of government not provided for in the Holy Scriptures. The first position, I believe, finds no advocates

among professed Christians of any class, and need not therefore be further considered. The second, to be sure, has its advocates, but they are comparatively few, and, it seems to me, have seldom sustained their position for any considerable length of time with entire satisfaction to themselves. And I see not how it could be otherwise; for in the sacred constitution nothing is settled except general principles, and these in a manner so entirely *general*, that practical details, though they might claim protection under them, cannot be specifically directed or guided by them. A single example, and that taken from the department in which the instructions of Christ were most of all explicit as respects Church Government, may serve our purpose. Christ instituted and commissioned the ministry of the word, and ordained its perpetuity; but, guided alone by the light of that commission, how were successors to the first ministers to be selected? ordained? appointed to fields of labor, and the rest? Are they to be received, authorized, and appointed to their work by the people? Where do you find it in the directions of Christ? Or, is this to be done by the ministry? Where is the explicit command? Who will say that the general instruc-

tions of the Saviour can be carried into practical effect under the action of machinery supplied in its *minutiæ* by the commission itself?

The third position is, that Christ has given, in his word, all that on his part was really needed, and that whatever else may be necessary to efficiency and harmony, is left to the discretion and prudence of the Church itself, restricted only by the Divine constitution. On this position we take our stand, and think it supported,

1. *By the argument of analogy.* God, for reasons worthy the Divine character, gave to the Jews a system of government comprehending numerous details, as well as first principles, while Christ gave to his disciples only the latter; and yet the temple services and synagogue services called into existence many regulations and officials not provided for in the original statute; and these necessary additions of services and officers, so far from being condemned by Christ and his apostles, became the general model after which the economic organism of the Christian Church was formed. Now, if the Jews found such a measure necessary when there was so much fulness in the laws of Moses, and if this exercise of liberty is nowhere condemned, is it unreasonable to suppose that Christ allows to his

commonwealth the like freedom, where he has not at all pretended to enter into any details with regard to polity, ritual, and the like? To be sure, the Jew was hedged in and bounded in all such enactments by the requirements and prohibitions of the Divine constitution, and even the great Sanhedrim had no right to contravene this, or to "make void the law through their traditions" and regulations; but so are Christians, and Christian councils and convocations, bound by the constitution of Christ, and can in no manner contravene it, or come in conflict with its provisions. And such restrictions are demanded by all well-balanced governments, whether civil or ecclesiastic; yet a prudent restriction not to go beyond the constitution ought not to be construed into an interdict to action within the constitution.

2. *The argument of necessity.* Of necessity, I say, because, as Christ has not given, in his written word, minor regulations, or statutes for carrying out the purposes of his great commission, and as no body ecclesiastic can operate harmoniously and effectively to that end without such rules of action, "that there be no schism in the body," the enactment of such needful regulations seems to become matter of necessity, as

strictly so as the carrying into effect of the command to preach the gospel to every creature.

3. *The argument ad hominem—drawn from the conduct of the adverse party.* For a fact it certainly is, that no body or church has ever attempted to operate in the work of evangelizing the world, without the adoption, in some form, of rules and modes of action not provided specifically for in the sacred word. And this is quite as true of those who have denied the right of churches to adopt any such prudential rules, and have insisted that there is in the Testament a fulness of instruction sufficient to cover all the practical ground, as of those whose opinions and practice are more in harmony with each other.

As those for whom I write mainly have little disagreement just here, it may not be necessary to advance other arguments, or to amplify the few that have been rather axiomatically stated.

The great comprehensive questions before us are—1. What have churches a legitimate right to do in the regulating of their own affairs? 2. By whom, and in what manner, should that be done which churches may of right do?

1. In order to settle what *the* Church, or a denominational Church, has a proper warrant for

doing, it will be necessary to ascertain how much ground is covered by the constitution, the Holy Scriptures; and the remainder of what is required for the purity, peace, and efficiency of the Church, will define the amount of what is left to the discretion and responsibility of ecclesiastical bodies.

The constitution determines *Doctrines of Faith, Christian Sacraments, Precepts of Morality and Piety*, and institutes the *Christian Ministry*. Against these, or contrary to them, a Church cannot rightfully ordain any thing. Without power to ordain new doctrines, sacraments, or moral laws, the sense in which a Church can be said to possess legislative authority must be a very restricted and qualified one. What then is left to the Church's power and discretion? We answer: the Church has had much action about those very matters of which we have just spoken as being covered by the constitution. 1. Of doctrines: many of the councils in the early ages of Christianity were chiefly employed in the settling of doctrinal controversies, as the Council of Nice, the first ecumenical council; and all the reformed Churches have had ecclesiastical action on the subject of gospel doctrines. But here two things must be noticed:



first, that such action has only been declarative. They did not pretend to decree any new doctrine; but when differences grew up, they claimed to decide what they would receive and subscribe to as Christian doctrines, and to determine that such as rejected what they held to be fundamental, should not be admitted, or retained in their communion. So the Council of Nice was chiefly employed in considering and condemning the Arian heresy. Such a power seems necessary for the harmony of the body. The second thing to be here remarked is, that even this declarative action has ceased to be necessary in the orthodox Churches; because, in their organic laws—their platforms of organization—this matter of doctrine is concluded. So the Augsburg Confession of Faith, adopted A. D. 1530, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, adopted 1562, the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith, adopted 1643, and the Twenty-Five Articles of Faith of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (modified and abridged from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England,) adopted 1784, contain the fixed doctrines of nearly all—perhaps all—orthodox Protestant Churches, and about them no action is ever taken, none being necessary.

2. With regard to sacraments, they are very much in the same category with doctrines, inasmuch as all the Confessions above specified fully define the nature and number of Christian sacraments, all agreeing that there are but two. The Roman Church has decreed the existence of *seven* sacraments; but this appears to me a clear instance of contravening the doctrine of the constitution by mere ecclesiastical authority.

3. The subject of moral duties and offences is so laid down in the sacred record, that little has been deemed necessary by the Churches, even in the way of declarative action. Yet, when a specific act is not clearly forbidden by the constitution, but is believed to be fairly comprehended in a general rule which is explicitly laid down, Churches have felt authorized to assign to the act such moral classification as they judged proper. So the Council of Laodicea, held about A. D. 365, ordained that "Christians, when they go to a wedding, must not join in dancing, but conduct themselves as becomes Christians." Regarding this conduct as prohibited by a principle of the constitution, the council felt authorized to forbid the specific act. Again, comparatively little is said in the sacred book about the mode of administering discipline on the different classes

of offenders, the manner of excommunicating them, the circumstances under which they may be restored to the Churches' peace, etc.; and hence Churches have felt authorized to act in providing for matters of this class.

4. With respect to the gospel ministry, though so clearly a Divine institute, yet hardly any thing else beside the fact that Christ instituted it, and required that through that agency the doctrine of salvation by faith in a Redeemer should be preached everywhere and always; I say, that besides this, scarcely any thing is settled. Nothing is said by the Saviour about orders in the ministry, about the manner of appointing and authorizing them, assigning them to fields of labor, etc.; and hence, about this class of interests the Church has been employed to a considerable extent.

The subjects to which rules, statutes, and canons of ecclesiastical bodies chiefly refer, may be stated shortly as follows: (1.) Admission of members, and appliances for their religious improvement; (2.) the manner of administering discipline on offenders; (3.) granting authority to ministers, and deposing them; (4.) appointing them to fields of labor, and dismissing them; (5.) the appointment and duties of subordinate

Church officers ; (6.) acquiring, holding, and appropriating Church property. That at least some of these provisions are absolutely necessary, and are not disposed of by the constitution, very few would venture to deny. And this is all we need, to make it clear that Christ has committed to the Church the work of supplying details, in the matter of ecclesiastical regulations wherein he has not been pleased to afford the fulness and clearness necessary to all the ends of Church government.

Taking for granted that there is somewhat for the Church to do, in ordering her own government and economic regulations, we approach the main subject for investigation : By whom, and in what manner, is that work to be done ?

## CHAPTER II.

RIGHTS OF THE MINISTRY IN MATTERS OF  
• CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

THE question now pending is, not as to whether the Church has a right to make rules and regulations for her own government—such rules not being in conflict with the word of God—but “To whom does the right of administering the affairs of the Church properly pertain?”

While some contend that the power in question is inherent in the ministerial office, others think a large proportion of it properly belongs to the laity. The broad claims of the clergy in past time, and the large concessions made to them, might very naturally have the effect to run the first opinion out into a dangerous extreme; and that this has been the case in point of fact, will be disputed, I suppose, by no one but such as still wish to maintain that high claim, or who have an interest in defending those who do maintain it.

On the other hand, the strong preference for republicanism—and especially in this country—together with the popular assumption, that the Church is purely a voluntary association, deriving all its authority from the free consent of those entering into it, and having, therefore, full power to that effect, ought to be modelled after the popular civil democracies of the time; this assumption, I say, might very naturally carry the second theory to an opposite extreme. It will probably be found in this case, as in most others, that truth and safety lie between the extremes.

If any specific grants of power are made by the constitution to the permanent ministry, then to that extent, whatever it may be, they are not only warranted in holding to the possession, but such a measure becomes a duty which they cannot rightfully decline—a sacred trust, for their fidelity in the discharge of which they will be held to a strict account. It is not certain that we can ascertain what exact amount of power, and of what precise kind, Christ did commit to the ministry; yet it appears to me evident, that something in the nature of ecclesiastical authority is recognized as antecedent to Church organization itself, which is therefore in a sense the nucleus around which such organizations must

form, and that this authority is originally vested in the ministry of the gospel. So much, however, will be readily granted by many who will yet yield nothing to overgrown ministerial claims. To find out determinately the nature and extent of the authority that is so vested, would help us forward very much in this investigation; and even an approach to this point would be something valuable gained.

For the foundation and general elements of ministerial authority, we must look chiefly to the commission of Christ, by which the gospel ministry was itself instituted.

The Lord Jesus, after stating his right to confer such authority, based on the possession of "all power in heaven and on earth," proceeds to ordain the following things in relation to the ministry: 1. That it shall be universal in its range of action: "Go into *all* nations." 2. That it is to be perpetual: "I am with you to the *end of the world*." 3. That its first great business is to preach and teach, and so make disciples: "Preach the gospel to every creature"—"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." 4. That another and sequent duty of the ministry is, to administer to those they shall have disciplined, the



initiatory sacrament of baptism, thereby receiving them into the Christian Church, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." 5. The ministry is required to enforce faith in Christ as the great condition of salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Here the sacred trust is committed to the ministry, of making disciples to Christ by preaching the gospel, and also the duty—if baptism be the doorway of the Church, as nearly all admit—of receiving their converts into the Christian Church.

But here arises a question: How were the apostles to receive members into the Church, when as yet the Christian Church was not formally instituted? The question must, as it appears to me, remain unanswered, unless we allow that a commission and command to impart all gospel teaching, and to apply to the taught the initiatory sacrament, carried along with it, by necessary implication, all the incidental powers required for the perfecting of the organization clearly contemplated by the commission. Will the premises warrant the inference? Suppose a king should send his officers into another country, with a commission to teach the people the

principles of his government, and to convince them of its superiority to all others; suppose the commission should run, that they who should submit and take the oath of allegiance should be saved and made citizens, and that they who refused submission should be destroyed; and suppose the commission further empowered those officers to receive persons as citizens of the king's government, by administering the oath of allegiance; and that this course of things was to go on under the provisions of that commission perpetually, without any further instruction from the sovereign: would it be understood by any one that those officers were restricted to the naked letter of their commission? Or would it not rather be concluded, that whatever other power was necessary to the carrying into effect the measures evidently contemplated in the commission, and particularly the power of forming those new-made subjects into a province, or subordinate government, under the constitution, laws, and general sovereignty of the king who gave the commission—this power, I say, was necessarily implied, both in the terms and the objects of the commission? Yet, an affirmative answer here does not entirely conclude the question under notice; for it might be argued, and

not without force, that the power to form such an organization carries with it a power of admitting others to a participation in the affairs of the organization. This might be true in some measure, as regards those incidental powers supposed to be implied in the terms and intentions of the commission; but it could never be true in any sense, as it respects the power vested in the officer as an ambassador or a viceroy of the king, for these powers could only be conferred by the king. So is the case of the ministry: God at first commissioned them to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to do whatever subordinately or incidentally is necessary to the doing of these agreeably to the Divine intention. With these primary duties they cannot dispense; in these they are the ambassadors of Christ, and to ambassadors of Christ only can they be committed. Nor, indeed, can they create such an ambassador: they may judge of his qualifications, and, believing his commission to be valid, they may acknowledge his claims, and endorse them to others; but the authority, to be really valid, must come from the King of Zion himself.

I think, then, we have fairly reached this conclusion: in whatever belongs distinctively to the

powers and duties of the ministry, the laity have no right to a share or participation; nor have the ministry any right to yield to such a claim, if it were set up—the trust not being a negotiable one, no power of discretion is left them; and that at least the duty of preaching the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments, are found in this category; but that with regard to those acts that are subordinate and incidental to the great ends of the Christian ministry, no interdict is found in the constitution, and herein a discretionary power may be claimed.

We find here, too, this material fact, that in the order of the Divine commission, the ministry existed before Church organization. And this has been the case all along, under the operations of missionary extension; and the fact cannot be disguised, that from the ministry Church organizations have more directly proceeded. This seems to be a necessary result of the missionary and aggressive character of the gospel and its ministry; and right too, as necessary, if such organizations be themselves right. Thus, a missionary goes into a pagan country, preaches the gospel, makes converts to Christianity, and administers to them the sacraments; but as a flock, or rather as individuals that may be formed into

a flock, they need a fold and a pasture ; for now they are shepherded on the commons and the mountains, without enclosure or the benefits and securities of an organized flock. Who shall proceed in this business ? Those young pagan converts are utterly ignorant of the whole matter ; and the result must be, that either the shepherd must lead them into organizing measures, and distribute rights and duties among them in an orderly manner, for the good of the whole, or he must retain the whole governing power in his own hands. Moses was made the depositary of a comprehensive governing power, by the God of Israel ; but finding that he could not wield the mighty aggregate of authority with convenience and efficiency, while he retained what of his trust was not transferable, he distributed a large portion of the government to the judges of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens ; and the great objects of his commission were much promoted by the arrangement.

Yet, this whole power was committed originally to Moses, not by specific direction, relating to all the details, but by a broad commission, the carrying into effect of whose provisions comprehended those details by implication. Nor was there either command or specific grant for vesting

so large a share of his power in other hands; the measure was suggested by his father-in-law, and was recommended by the expediency and necessity of the case, and by its not being in contravention of any law of God.

Here we seem to have gained another standpoint: that the ministry is the fountain, ecclesiastically, of Church power; for, by Divine arrangement, the responsibility is committed to them, both of gathering converts and of organizing them into regular Churches. Start not at this declaration, as if the ghost of old *jure divino* were about to appear before you and claim his long-lost dominion; for I regard the position as being as safe and innocent as it is true. If Christ, in instituting his Church, did so by a commission to the ministry; if the details of Church power are incident and auxiliary to the objects of the ministry; if the ministry is *before* the Church, and is the nucleus around which it is collected, and the agency, necessarily, by which it comes into organization, the proposition above must, I think, be true. As to its innocence and safety, we need only remark, that the fact of communicating authority to the Church at large through the ministry, as the most natural and convenient medium under the Christian consti-

tution, no more gives right to that ministry to retain and appropriate what properly belongs to others, and can be better exercised by them, than the employment of a common carrier—as a shipmaster—to convey goods from one point to another, gives him a right of property in all the merchandise transported through his agency ; on the contrary, it becomes a sort of fiduciary trust in his hands by this means, increasing the responsibility of embezzlement or mal-appropriation, by the character of the investiture. I would not, however, be understood as asserting that the entire of Church power is inherently in the ministry, as belonging to them ; but rather, that in the order of the gospel economy they are first, and that the power under notice is therefore in them in a sort of seminal sense, partly to be exercised by themselves, and partly in trust, to be committed to the custody of others ; or, that it is in them somewhat as the entire of human nature was concentrated in Adam, before Eve was taken from his side. God, in that case, made but one original creation—one human nature—yet from that one went out a secondary creation or emanation, not as original as the first, yet as essential to the grand design of creation. The man still remained the chief—the head—but

ceased to comprehend the whole of human nature, as in this case the ministry must ever be the chief element in matters ecclesiastical, but not to the exclusion of other and important co-operatives.

The subsequent notices of the ministry which are found in the New Testament after the date of the commission of which we have been treating, go to sustain all the claims I have herein set up in behalf of the ministry, and might even be construed in favor of larger concessions in that direction. And as we have set out in search of truth, whether favoring or adverse to our cherished theories, we must here look a little farther into this matter. Several places which are understood to have a strong bearing on the point now before us, as those concerning the "power of the keys," "remitting and retaining sins," etc., will probably find a more appropriate place in which to be brought up hereafter; yet a few things seem properly to belong here.

Paul requires the elders or presbyters of Ephesus "to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*." Acts xx. 28. He commands: "Remember them that have the *rule over you*, who have spoken unto you the word of God." Heb. xiii. 7. The min-



isters "who had spoken unto them the word of God," were they who "*ruled* over them." The point we would bring out is, that the ministry are plainly spoken of as *rulers* of the Church; and perhaps this is as well cleared by the two passages quoted, as it would be by the adding of many more of like import. When we come to speak of the specific acts of authority allowed to the ministry, this subject may receive some further explanation.

I judge what has been said is sufficient to show that the Church is something more than a mere voluntary association, having no authority but that derived from the consent of the parties on entering into the organization; that there is in a Church somewhat that dates back anterior to the organization, and traces lineage to a higher source than that from which a common club or temporary association receives its whole power—the naked agreement of the parties uniting. Consent of parties is important, is essential to a perfect Church organization; this I freely admit; but then I contend for something anterior to this, and in no unimportant sense above it—a germinal element that has no dependence on human consent, but claims the authority of Divine institute.

## CHAPTER III.

TRUE AND FALSE CLAIMS OF THE MINISTRY  
DISTINGUISHED.

It is judged necessary, here, to distinguish plainly the true ground upon which the claims of the ministry to preëminence in Church authority rests, from other grounds of claim, the validity of which we cannot acknowledge. The Roman Church, for example, claims the basis of Divine institute for whatever she chooses to inculcate as necessary. So the Council of Trent decreed that there are seven sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ, and pronounces him accursed who does not receive this doctrine.

The claim of Divine right is also set up for the high powers of the ministry, *in* the Church of England, but not in any proper sense *by* that Church as such. This doctrine connects with that of apostolic succession, as it is called, which makes the validity of the ministry depend on a

succession of ordinations in a direct line from the apostles. The assumption is in effect, that a peculiar and supernatural power was conferred by Christ on his apostles, without the possession of which no ministration could be valid; that this power was communicated by them to such persons as they inducted into the ministry, and that it has been imparted in the act of ordination from one to another in an unbroken line of succession down to the present time. This doctrine, it appears to me, has nothing in reason or Scripture to support it; and according to it, no man can know that he is a true minister of Christ, and no Church can know that she is served by a valid ministry; for, to suppose that any one of this day can trace back his ordination through all the confusion and darkness of the middle ages, and through a period of fifty generations, to some one of the apostles, demands an amount of credulity not common to reasoning and intelligent people. And then, too, if one could manage to persuade himself that he was in the true line of sacred genealogy, the very conviction, whether he avoided being puffed up with it or not, would compel him to look upon every other good man and faithful minister, who has not the assurance to set up the same preten-

sion, as an intruder in the sacred office, and therefore one to be put down. Furthermore, we have assumed, a little way back, that an ambassador cannot create an ambassador, this being the work of the supreme power; but, if whoever is ordained in the supposed regular line of succession is a true ambassador of Christ, whether his character be good or bad, (for the doctrine is, that the wickedness of such an one does not impair the validity of his ministrations,) then indeed may a libidinous pope, or a wine-bibbing bishop, take this sacred work out of the hands of Christ, and create for him valid ambassadors from among his worst enemies.

And so, on the other hand, if the "Holy Ghost truly calls one to the work of the ministry," without the concurrence of such a pope or bishop, the call of God must go for naught.

I believe in an apostolic succession, in what I judge to be the true sense of it, but one differing considerably from that noticed above. Christ instituted the ministry, and decreed its perpetuity in a succession of faithful men of apostolic zeal and purity; but, while he left to them the management of much that respects economic details, he held distinctly in his own hands this great matter of succession, by reserv-

ing the sole power of creating his own ambassadors to the end of the line. Mark the terms of the commission: "Go preach my gospel," etc., "and lo *I am with you to the end of the world.*" Those to whom this was first spoken, were only to live and labor for a few years, and how could he be *with* them in their ministrations to the end of the world? Thus, "*I am now with you* ; and when you pass off the stage, and the future becomes the present, my word is still heard by those I shall call to succeed you—I am with *you* ;" and so on to the final end. It would be strange if the supreme authority—the king, if you please—should commit the whole appointing power of officers for a long expedition to a subordinate officer, when the king declared, on making the first appointment, that he should himself *be with the expedition* all the time to the end.

It was an act of mercy to smite the rock and bring out the cooling beverage for the fainting millions of Israel ; but let us suppose that years afterward, when removed far away among the arid deserts, they again thirsted, and were about to slake their thirst at the stream "that followed them" from the rock of Horeb, still gurgling and dancing invitingly at their feet. But a

venerable priest interposes with much earnestness: "Ye men of Israel, *I* only have the true water of Meribah, and if ye drink of any other ye shall die; Moses dipped it from the head fountain, and poured it into a vessel belonging to Aaron; Aaron gave it to another, and he to another, and I am the forty-ninth in a direct line of succession from the veritable fountain of Horeb:" what effect would such an address probably have produced? The thirsty multitude might have replied: "A fig for your stale fluid: know you not, sir, that the pure cooling stream from the rock has followed us; has been *with* us in all our journeyings and at all our stations, and is now sparkling brightly before us? While we have it in original purity, we care little through how many hands and vessels that has passed which you offer, and which may have been taken from the true rock, or, for aught that you can possibly know, may have been dipped up from a filthy rain-pool by some one of your numerous predecessors." Such, it appears to me, would have been a reasonable and sensible answer to such a proposition.

If the original commission be not the only head-spring of the imagined succession, then there is none; and if that be the only source,

Paul was not in the succession, for he was neither of the original college of apostles, nor was he ordained to the ministry by them or their successors. And he seems to glory in it that he did not receive his office "of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 1. If it should be said that this declaration of Paul is predicated of his apostolic office only, we reply that the ordinary office of preacher was comprehended in that of apostle, there being no apostles who were not preachers; and, further, in point of fact he was, as a preacher, as well as apostle, put into the work, "not of man, neither by man," but directly by Jesus Christ, and, as it would seem, without the ordinary forms of induction. And if it be argued that Paul's was a case wherein Christ directly interposed his authority in a miraculous manner, we reply, that even this proves that he had not delegated his power of calling ministers to others when he gave the general commission.

It is certainly strange that men who deny to *orders* the character of a sacrament, and who stand up for a call to the ministry by the Holy Ghost, should yet deny that any man can be in that succession without submitting to a consecration at their hands; a consecration appro-

priate enough in itself, yet quite subordinate to a Divine call. Wherein then does the true succession of the Christian ministry consist?

Christ, as I apprehend the subject, ordained and published in the original commission, that there should be a perpetual succession of ministers in the Church and the world; and effectually to secure this end, he decreed that he would own no man-made minister, but only such as were called by himself. But as these were designed to act in harmony with each other, and coöperatively with the Church, it was fit that they should be suitably accredited to each other, to the Church, and to the world. Hence there are given various marks and indications by which a man is to judge whether the inward movings on his spirit are of the Holy Ghost, and by which also his brethren may form a tolerably reliable judgment on the same question. When those marks and indices are found, and his own inward convictions corroborate them, the proper authorities of the Church may, with a good degree of safety, admit him to a state of trial in the ministry, where he will be able, by the further evidence of fruit-bearing, to satisfy both them and himself that he is truly called of God to the sacred work. Should the evidence of



fruit of his labor appear, he may then be admitted as a true minister of Christ, by such appropriate ceremony as the Church may deem it proper to employ, and thus accredit his claims to the Church and the world.

In all, however, that is done in the premises by the existent ministry and the Church, nothing more is legitimately intended than to declare formally and officially: "We believe, from all the evidence, and after due trial, that God has called this man to be a minister of his word, and we accordingly acknowledge him in that character." This is the true succession, and this is all that the Church and ministry have to do in perpetuating it. And does it seem reasonable that one called of God to the work should be denied the privilege of being so recognized, unless his claims shall be endorsed in a particular manner, and by a particular individual? Can the Lord Jesus be thus utterly dependent on his erring creatures for a valid succession of the ministers of his grace?

But here comes up this other view: owing to the fallibility of human judgment, and the liability of even good men to come, more or less, under the influence of prejudices and partialities, it will be likely to happen that a man may

be ecclesiastically accredited as a minister of Christ, whom Christ has not truly called to the work; and that one truly commissioned by the Holy Spirit may find his claims dishonored by the Church. Such common liability to mistake, our theory does not claim to remove; yet we are left on as good ground in this regard as successionists are, and ground more consistent, as I think. We disclaim infallibility: a large class of successionists do the same, and yet they seem to me to claim *half* an infallibility; for, if they do not insist that all they do in the matter of consecrating men for the ministry is infallibly unerring, they at least hold that whatever is done in the premises by any other body is infallibly wrong. A man may be rejected by an ecclesiastical body because he has not those doctrinal affinities that are necessary to harmony with the body, and he is left free, without prejudice of his Divine call, to bring up his case before another body where the like obstacle will not lie; but on the other theory, a rejection on whatever ground, whether frivolous or grave, is conclusive and final, for no other body, agreeably to their holding, has any right to recognize him as a minister of Christ.

## CHAPTER IV.

## RIGHTS OF THE LAITY CONSIDERED.

HAVING gone through this general analysis of the rights of the ministry and the source of their authority, it may be well, before entering upon the details in which these elements are expected to come up in practical exemplification, to bestow some attention, in a like way, on the rights of the laity.

The first ground upon which a participation in the government of the Church is claimed for the laity, or, at any rate, the first that we shall call up, is, in substance, the following: "The laity, besides having a common interest with the ministry in the prosperity of the Church, are *taxed* with the pecuniary burdens of the Church; and as taxation without representation is regarded as wrong and oppressive in civil governments, and a principle which our revolutionary

fathers 'resisted unto blood,' it should be rejected in the Church."

A common answer to this position has been made by asserting, that as men go voluntarily into the Church, and as there is nothing coercive in the assessment or collection of their contributions, the giving of their substance voluntarily for the support of the Church does not partake of the nature of taxation, and should not therefore be allowed to set up a claim only predicable of a constrained or compulsory contribution.

This reasoning may silence some, but, I think, will not be likely to satisfy many. I see no great force in it. When a man enters the Church, he does so knowing that it cannot carry on its operations without pecuniary means, that those are to come from the membership, and that he, as well as others, will be expected to contribute to the raising of those means. So far, to be sure, all is voluntary; and, further still, he is neither literally compelled to join himself to the Church, nor, having done so, to make the contributions expected of him; yet he feels it a sacred duty he owes to himself and his God to unite with the Church; as a conscientious Christian he is under a religious constraint to do so, and is not

at liberty to remain out of it in order to escape taxation. And having joined it, he feels bound by duty, honor, and conscience to bear his part of its burdens. A man could avoid taxation in the state, by taking himself into regions beyond the operation of law; and because he does not do this, is he to be told that his contributions for the support of the state revenues being voluntary—because he could avoid them—are not therefore to be regarded as a tax?

But while I allow that every person joining a Church, even the most free and liberal, thereby subjects himself to taxation for its support, I do not feel bound to admit the conclusion that is predicated of that fact—that taxation is the basis of rights, civil or ecclesiastical. The position is unsound in political philosophy, and untrue in fact. Property is the basis of taxation; for if a man have no property you cannot tax his property; and if even you lay a tax on his head, if he have no property you cannot collect the tax. Without property, then, there can be no taxation; but is it true that without property there can be no civil rights? This matter of right, arising out of taxation, is claimed mainly with regard to suffrage; but the mere ownership of property and subjection to taxation give

no rights of suffrage. An unnaturalized foreigner may be taxed, but he has no right of suffrage; a female may pay tax, but this does not give her access to the polls. Again, if taxation be the basis of suffrage and civil rights, then equity demands that the rights in question be enlarged or contracted proportionately to the basis. Thus a man pays a tax of one dollar, and is thus entitled to one vote in the election of officers of the government; but another man pays a tax of one hundred dollars, and is, by the same rule, entitled to one hundred votes. I present these absurdities of a popular maxim for the purpose of showing, that though it may be used by the demagogue with effect, we all reject the whole thing from our graver philosophy and from our practice. The taxation argument is a mere dollar logic, which, when analyzed to its simple element, imports only this: "I have paid you my money, and I have a right to a voice in its appropriation." Or, "I aid in paying the salaries of governor, senators, sheriffs, etc., and have hence a right to aid in their selection." So you aid in paying the fees of jurors, and ought therefore to have a vote in their election; and more: you aid to support the criminals in prison, and should for that reason have a voice in elect-

ing the men who represent you in that department; and to support paupers and lunatics, and hence have a right to vote for those you judge best qualified to fill those places. This principle looks to no one qualification of good citizenship; if carried into consistent practice in the state, it would generate an aristocracy of wealth, and unsettle all the better elements of government; and what disorders it would create in the Church I need not attempt to describe.

If, then, Church and State were placed on the same governmental basis—as they are not—this argument would do little toward showing up a necessity for democratic Church government. We leave it then for the present, and go in search of a better.

The next argument for the rights of the laity that we notice is—"That the Church is an association of persons possessing equality of natural rights, united voluntarily for purposes of mutual advantage, and being equal in natural rights, there should be no material inequality of rights among them in their confederated or social organization."

I am not disposed to meet this argument, as it has sometimes been met, by saying to the laity: "If it be a voluntary association, you were

not compelled to join it, and if not content with the share you have in its management, you are at liberty to leave it ;” because I regard the argument as worthless, and the employment of it as ungenerous and unkind. For with regard to the first part of the argument—if such it may be called—as was suggested a while ago, a conscientious man joins a Church because he believes it his religious duty to do so, and he joins a *particular* Church because, though he may not approve all things connected with it, he believes that he can better serve God there, loves its doctrines more, and is more edified by its means of grace than in any other connection. He was therefore under a grave, moral, and religious obligation to connect himself there. While, therefore, he bows obediently to the tables of the law, adores the Shekinah, and offers the morning and evening sacrifice, it is hardly generous or just to treat him as an intruding guest because he takes leave to think something out of taste about the vestments of the priests or the tapestry of the temple. The second occupies nearly the same ground as the first. A man may esteem his Church, on the whole, quite above all others ; he may have done much every way to build it up, and yet may honestly—even



if under a mistake—believe that some features in its polity might be modified for the better, and, by his very love of it, may be induced to labor for such modification; is it kind, is it just, then, coolly to invite such a man to abandon his beloved home, where the best treasures of his heart are stored, and his best labors have been bestowed, and to send him out on the bleak world a homeless wanderer, simply because he entertains opinions differing from ours with regard to the ordering of minor matters? I suppose we have no valid warrant for inviting any one to leave the Church for a cause less than that for which we might justly drive him from it.

But having declined these pleas as a reply to the second argument in behalf of lay rights, let us now turn to that argument itself, and subject it to a candid examination. I look on it as made up of a mixture of truth and error, and these we shall try to sort out and separate.

It is true that those composing a Church are naturally equal as men, and so as Christians, but it is not true that they are so as ministers and members; for God himself has put a difference between them, clear and marked. It is true that a Church is a voluntary association, as it regards the free consent of those who enter into

it, but it is not true in the sense of a mere voluntary uniting of men by mutual consent, thus giving origin to a society not antecedently instituted and provided for, because Christ himself founded the Church, and the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against it. Hence, the instituting of a Church requires the presence of an element that has in it the authority of the acknowledged Head of the Church.

Christ Jesus *instituted* the ministry of the word and ordinances; made it the ecclesiastical element and basis of the Church; gave to it primary rule and authority, and enjoined obedience on the membership. So he *recognized* civil governments by personal obedience and tax-paying, and by requiring of his followers obedience to every "ordinance of man."

Is there no difference between these two cases? Is the basis of the civil the same with that of the sacred? The recognition of them by Christ is entirely different; yet in process of time man placed them on the same footing, and that footing a most unwarranted one. Thus, Christ instituted a perpetual ministry with primary authority in his Church; but after a while that ministry was divided into numerous hierarchical orders, with lordly powers unknown to the first

disciples, and all these claimed by assumed *Divine right of succession*; so Christ recognized civil governments and the duty of obedience to them, but by and by we find kings too claiming to rule by *Divine right of succession*; and every petty tyrant professing to exercise his usurpations by the high authority of Heaven. Presently a contest grows up of these arrogant assumptions as to whose Divine right was the *diviner*. A Divine authority—so it seemed to be considered—must be supreme authority; hence, the pope or bishop claimed, under this imaginary charter, sovereignty over the State as well as the Church; and on like ground the king or emperor claimed to be the head of the Church as well as of the State. And as instances and residuums of this sublimated arrogance, you may, by only going to Italy, find an *ecclesiastic* holding civil supremacy by virtue of *succession* in the line of Divine right; and by going a shorter distance in the same direction, you may find a little female sovereign exercising supreme authority in State and in *Church* at once, by hereditary birth-right: a *pope-king*, and a *queen-pope*! *Succession* is the talisman with both, but with this difference, that in the king its virtue is in the *blood*, and a first-born fool from his loins is in

the succession and rules by Divine right, while in the priest its virtue lies in the *hands*, so that only through his sacred palms and fingers can the grace be imparted. Now, however much these two claims came to be alike, and alike absurd, you can hardly fail to perceive that the original basis of the two, that is of civil and ecclesiastical government, were very different. Christ acknowledged the right of civil governments, but he *instituted* none; and in the New Testament, they are distinctly referred to human agency. Kings, governors, and the rest, are declared to be “ordinances of man.” 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. But in the other case, he gave his Divine pledge to “build his Church” in the world permanently, and instituted his ministry as the primary instrumentality by which that Church was to be builded and regulated. In the one case he ordained the thing and the agencies for carrying it up—the Church and the ministry; in the other, he neither decreed kingdoms nor republics, kings nor presidents, apparently leaving them on the sole basis of “ordinances of man,” and to the exercise of human wisdom and prudence.

Men are at perfect liberty, so far as the Divine charter is concerned, to organize themselves

into any sort of civil government not in violation of the law of God, whether regal, aristocratic, or republican; but Christians have no authority to form themselves into a Church on exactly the same principles of perfect independence and freedom from restraint; for there is extant an older element of organization than their mere determination, and without reference to which they may not proceed. The primary elements of society may resolve in their organization that there shall be no emperor, no king, no nobles, for there is no restraint upon their resolves. A Church, in its forming stage, is somewhat different; it may, to be sure, resolve that there shall be no pope, no cardinal, no prelatical bishop, and the like, because no restriction exists at that point, but it cannot resolve that there shall be no ministry, no exercise of discipline, no sacraments, because such a statute would be void for unconstitutionality.

Possibly we can explain a little more fully the relation in which the laity of a Church stand to the anterior and germinal power of the ministry, by a military illustration. A regiment of soldiers is to be raised for the army; the first step toward this is the appointment by the government of A. B. as commandant. "But how can he be com-

mandant when as yet there is no regiment to be commanded?" He has the necessary authority of command, and that for collecting the men and forming them into a regular command. With these he goes out and procures volunteers for the service until the required number is obtained. Now there are present the authority of command and organization, and the required materials to be brought into an organized state, but even yet it is but elementally and not in due form and order a regiment. At this stage of progress a stickler for popular rights raises an excitement against the colonel: "We are naturally equal in power and rights," he says; "we have all volunteered freely to serve our country, and A. B. has no more right to command me, than I have to command him." What can be replied to this reasoning? "The government appointed me to raise and to command a regiment; I was made its nucleus, around which you collected on my authorized invitation. I am willing that you shall exercise in the selection of subordinate officers whatever rights you may consistently with the interests of the service, and not in conflict with those powers for the exercise of which I am held directly responsible; but neither you nor I possess the right of appointing a command-

ant; this is with the government, and was, in this case, exercised before your consent to serve was given, and that consent was brought about by this same appointment." If this reasoning would be good under a human commission, can it be less so under one of Divine authority?

Civil or natural rights, however clear, cannot therefore become a predicate from which to raise ecclesiastical rights, at least, as a whole. Whatever is vested in the ministry, clearly and permanently, cannot be lawfully interfered with by the laity; and this vested authority, whatever it may be, must first be deducted from the aggregate sum of Church power, before we can enter upon an enumeration of those powers that are subject to the discretionary and prudential disposal of the Church at large.

The inquiry here presents itself before us: Have the laity really any rights in the affairs of Church government? and if so, on what ground do they rest?

That they have rights, and such as are to them important, ought not to be disputed. The assumption that the laity have no right but that of submission, and no remedy for real or supposed errors or grievances but to abandon the Church or "starve out the ministry," is an in-

sult to the understanding and the feelings of Christian men, and has been productive of great evils. Little better than this is the position, that persons joining a Church know the character of its polity, and, therefore, by that act become obligated not only to submit to it, but to make no suggestion for its improvement; and this other position, out of which perhaps the last-named grows, that a Christian has no ecclesiastical rights except those he acquires by becoming a member of some Church, and none there save those prescribed by the laws of the body at the time of his uniting with it. As an heir of grace he is entitled to a place in the visible Church of Christ, and in that Church is entitled to the protection of his Christian character, and to the enjoyment of those means and privileges necessary to his religious improvement. He is entitled to a participation in all those Church actions for which provision has not been made by the head of the Church before the organization itself. To argue that where several persons have united together as a Church, and formed, by authority of their own will, a set of rules for government, whoever afterward unites with them is for ever barred from suggesting any amendment, because those rules were in existence be-



fore his union with the association, is virtually assuming, on the one hand, that the Church is purely a voluntary society with no higher than human authority, in the very worst sense, and, on the other, that it is too perfect to be improved in any of its regulations. I hold, then, that a lay Christian has, in virtue of his relation to Christ and his invisible Church, a valid claim to participate in all those rights in the visible Church which Christ has not vested elsewhere, and that this title, though not inherent in the common political sense, is yet *graciously inherent* in the Christian.

## CHAPTER V.

PARTICULAR RIGHTS OF THE MINISTERS AND  
LAITY.

AIMING to narrow our ground, by throwing out all that is not controverted, we inquire what rights are conceded to the ministry exclusively. The right of preaching the gospel is the primary one in the ministry. Closely connected with this, and inseparable from it, is that of administering the sacraments, and of exhorting, reproofing, and admonishing those committed to their pastoral care. These seem to be well settled by common consent; but some others are subjects of controversy. The first of these now to be considered is:

1. *The power of receiving members into the visible Church.* Against this right as pertaining to the ministry, it is urged that the society of which a man is to be made a member, should have the right to say whether he should become

one of themselves or not. I do not now inquire whether this view is reasonable, but only whether it is in accordance with the constitution—the charter. I think it is not. For, 1st, the command to go and disciple all nations is admitted to imply the folding of the converts in the Church. When a missionary goes into a pagan land, and makes converts where there was before no Church, and not even a single member of the Church, how are these converts to be received into the Church unless by him who was instrumental in their conversion? They cannot admit themselves, and unless he does it, it cannot be done at all. 2d. The sacrament of baptism is admitted, by all parties to this controversy, to be the regular door of entrance into the Church; but all concur in restricting the right of administering baptism to the ministry alone; at least, except in extreme cases. If, then, baptism is the door of the Church, and if Christ has set the ministers to keep that door, requiring them to open it to the worthy, and close it against the impenitent, I see not but that the question is conclusively settled in the Divine constitution, so far as positive and vested right is concerned. We might here introduce, as collateral evidence, the authority given by Christ to the ministry to

open and shut the door of the kingdom—clearly meaning the Church or kingdom of grace; but perhaps the point is as clear as additional evidence would make it. But are the laity entirely excluded from a participation in this important work? I think they are, effectually so, as it regards any authoritative control in the premises. They may be lawfully admitted to advisory co-operation in the matter, but the strict right seems to be vested in the ministry. And there appears to be reason as well as authority for this arrangement; for, if the laity had exclusive, or only coëqual control with the ministry, so as to render their concurrence necessary to the validness of the act, the effect would be to render it impossible to admit members into the Church except where Churches and members already existed.

There is nothing, however, so far as I can see, to prohibit the minister from availing himself of the judgment and counsel of the laity where he has them at hand, provided their action shall claim no authoritative character; and in accordance with this is the practice of at least some of the principal Churches. So in the Presbyterian Church, the session, composed of the lay elders and pastor, are the judges of those who shall be admitted to sealing ordinances. In the Method-

ist Episcopal Church, an official layman—a class-leader—is required to report to the pastor on the character and conduct of a probationer who has been under his care, preparatory to his being received into the Church; this, however, is but a convenient mode of procuring necessary information respecting the suitableness of the candidate for admission, and does not relieve the minister of the final responsibility in the case. The formal admission into the English and the Protestant Episcopal Churches is by confirmation received at the hands of the bishop; yet even this arrangement does not preclude him from receiving information and counsel, wherever it may be had, and particularly from the subordinate pastor, who is specially charged with the duty of preparing the candidate for confirmation.

One Church, of recent date it is true, in its eagerness to liberalize all its provisions, has so far overlooked the requirements of the Divine charter, as to submit this matter wholly to a popular vote, entirely disallowing any vested authority in the minister. This I take to be an error. There is no Divine law to prohibit a minister from allowing his whole society to express by vote or otherwise their opinion of the suit-

ableness of a candidate, but there is law against his being compelled by such expression, contrary to his clear convictions, to baptize a man, admit him to the holy supper, or record his name among the accepted membership. That prudence and expediency will suggest a liberal course of proceeding in this matter, is readily enough seen; and few pastors are so avaricious of responsibility as to wish an exclusive monopoly of it, when the means and the power for dividing and lightening its burdens are at hand. And in accordance with this view is the general practice, so far as it has come under my notice. I have not, for example—save in a solitary and much-censured instance—known an application for membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church to be disposed of in a manner contrary to the judgment of the society, or of the leaders' meeting. "Then why not locate the power there legally?" Because Christ has deposited it elsewhere; and because, while the permissive exercise of it by the laity is as beneficial as the *authoritative* would be, if it were denied to the ministry, the effect would be essentially to cripple or break down all missionary and frontier operations, by putting it out of the power of the minister to perform an important part of his official work.

It appears to me that this matter is as properly disposed of in the Methodist Episcopal Church—the polity of which will be more particularly scrutinized than any other, in our following investigations—as it could be, for the preserving of the constitution, the liberty of the membership, and the purity of the Church.

1. It is made the duty of the pastor to receive members; this preserves the constitution given by the Saviour. 2. He is not permitted to admit a stranger even into a state of candidacy for membership, without the endorsement of one he knows. 3. He cannot admit the candidate into the Church, without a recommendation from his leader—a layman. 4. The candidate must be examined by the pastor, “before the Church,” respecting his qualifications for membership, and that examination must be “satisfactory.” Satisfactory to whom? Not to the pastor only, or there could be no reason for making it “before the Church,” but to the Church also. The law in its provisions confers as much power on the laity in this matter as the Divine constitution would well warrant, and its suggestions point plainly to the most liberal course of administration.

To me it appears that the views here taken of the matter of admitting members into the Church

is pretty fairly supported by the conduct of Peter on opening the gospel to the Gentiles. When he had preached, and the Holy Spirit had fallen on the people who believed, Peter regarded them as proper subjects for admission into the Christian Church by baptism; yet before doing so he inquired: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" that if any objection, unknown to himself, existed in any of the cases before him, he might be informed of it. No objection being made, he proceeded, with the assent of those present, to admit them by baptism into the Church.



## CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULAR ECCLESIASTICAL ACTS, ETC.,—  
CONTINUED.

2. *The power of excommunication and its incidents*: Is this too a right vested in the ministry by the original charter, or otherwise? This right is contended for in behalf of the ministry, on the ground that the power to do implies the power to undo—the right to admit to the Church, the right to expel from it. In a qualified sense I may admit the claim, but cannot regard the reasoning as conclusive. The two powers are not coincident, and do not rest on the same grounds. The argument of analogy is against the equality of the powers compared. In many instances a supreme executive officer has power to appoint a member of the judiciary, in whose impeachment and removal from office the appointing officer has not even a voice in common with others. And the same thing in principle would be found true in numerous instances, and, indeed, very

generally, except where the person appointed is properly the officer, not of the government, but of the functionary from whom he receives office. And yet I allow that the minister is charged with the duty of excommunicating refractory offenders, not, however, on his sole authority, but rather as the agent and representative of the Church, to carry into effect its awards and decrees. His relation to the excommunicating power is very much the same with that of a judge in matters of criminal jurisprudence. Process issues by his authority, he presides in the trial, determines questions of law, instructs the jury, and pronounces sentence on the convicted offender. Paul, it is true, *required* of the Corinthian Church the expulsion of an offender; but this was not an ordinary case, because Paul was an inspired apostle, and in this case seems to intimate that he acted by special command of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name he requires the proceeding; and then, too, the case was one of public scandal, and so flagrant as to be regarded as infamous even among the heathen. Yet even here, he does not do the act himself, but, by the "power of the Lord Jesus," requires it to be done by the Church.

I know how earnestly an inherent absolute

power of excommunication has been contended for in the ministry by men good and great, and men too of liberal and unbigoted views—such, for example, as Stillingfleet—yet I cannot see how this power can be placed in the same category with that of admitting persons into the Church. For, in declining to receive an applicant, you but leave him where he was, and do not necessarily by the act prejudice his moral or Christian character; but in the act of cutting off from the Church, the member is torn away out of the body of which he constituted an integral part, and you fix upon him a dark if not an indelible stain.

But I have other reasons for my opinion, and such as I consider more weighty. In the commission, as before remarked, the minister is required to administer the initiatory sacrament which admits to the Church; but we find there no corresponding command or authority for expelling from the Church. Moreover, excommunications can only take place where there are churches and members already existing, who may be called to coöperate with the minister in the delicate operation of amputating a member of the existent body; but, as we have seen, the reception of members has often to be performed

where there are no churches or members who could be called into such a coöperation.

Furthermore, in the place quoted from 1 Cor. v., the *Church* was required to act in the cutting off of the offender, though an apostle first acted in the premises with a view to prompt the Church to action; and in the case of personal offences, found in Matt. xviii., in the last resort, after private efforts for adjustment have failed, the command is, "Tell it to the *Church*."

In accordance with this view of the subject is the light we gather from the practice of the primitive Church within the first three centuries. Lord Chancellor King says: "As for the judges that composed the ecclesiastical court before whom offending criminals were convened, and by whom censured, they will appear to have been the whole Church, both clergy and laity." *Primitive Church*, p. 109. Again, he says: "As for the executive power, by which I understand the formal pronounciation of suspension and excommunications, and such like, that could be done by none but by the bishop, or by persons in holy orders deputed and commissioned by him." *Ibid*, p. 111. Origen (as quoted by Lord King) speaks of a criminal as appearing "before the *whole Church*." Dionysius speaks

of one appearing several times before the *Church* to beg their pardon. Cyprian professes to be insufficient of himself to judge of certain offenders, and says "they ought to be tried by all the people."

To a right understanding of what has been quoted from Lord King and the Fathers, it must be remembered that the terms "bishop," "whole church," etc., are applied to the pastor of a parish and his flock.

The doctrine then is, that the tribunal for the trial of a member under censure, is composed of his pastor and his fellow-members of the same society or parish—the former acting as judge, and the latter as jury in the case. But where a society or local church is numerous, it will seldom be found convenient, and often impracticable, to have all assembled on occasion of such trials; and in that case the whole is represented by a smaller and therefore more convenient number detailed for that service by different modes, according to the polity of the different denominational Churches. As the Christian and general reputation of an accused member is very much in the power of such a tribunal or judicatory, we think it worth while to examine shortly how they are constituted in several

of the Churches, and find out, if we can, the most excellent way.

All the older episcopal Churches, so far as I am informed, confide this business to the hands of the ministry. To this I have already objected as unauthorized and wrong in principle; and if I now add *unsafe*, I have nothing more to say respecting that plan.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, I think, adopts substantially the principle of the English Church on this subject. The constitution of that Church makes no provision respecting it; but the forty-second canon of 1832 provides for the *repelling* of an unworthy member from the communion, by the minister, and for reporting the case to the bishop, who has power to restore the repelled party, or, on complaint, to investigate the case. It also provides that for heinous offences, members may be deprived of all church privileges "according to such rules of process as may be provided by the General Convention; and until such rules or process shall be provided, by such as may be provided by the different State Conventions." From finding no such rules in the later canons that I have seen, I infer that no uniform regula-

tions exist on the subject, but that each diocese adopts its own regulations.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States has a thoroughly digested system of process and adjudication in proceeding against offenders, and which deserves to be considered with some care in such an investigation as we are now engaged in. The Methodist Episcopal Church also has a regularly prescribed mode of proceeding in dealing with offenders; yet not so perfectly reduced to system, in some respects, as the one last named. For purposes of convenience, we propose to notice these two systems side by side. And first,

*Of the judicatory for the trial of a private member of the Church.* From what has been said it seems to be clear, that the pastor should be the presiding judge in such a tribunal; and as this principle is fully recognized in both systems, in this they are on equal ground. In the manner of constituting this tribunal, however, there is a difference. In the Presbyterian Church a board of lay elders, elected by the congregation, ordained by the ministry, and holding office for life, are the permanent jury for the trial of all cases that may come up during their incumbency.

In the Methodist Church this duty is performed by the whole society of which the accused is a member, or, more generally, by a select number of them. In favor of the first plan the position seems to be about this: in the New Testament, ruling elders, or "elders who rule well," are recognized, and are therefore made the type of those employed in the Presbyterian Church. As it is supposed that they were rulers in the Church, but did not "labor in word and doctrine," it is deemed proper that as rulers they should enter into the composition of all the judicatories of the Church, from the session, the lowest, to the General Assembly, the highest. This arrangement does not conform very far to notions of popular or democratic government; yet, as it contravenes no law of Christ, a Christian body has a perfect right to adopt it as a convenient mode of proceeding based on expediency. But any thing in the way of setting up for it the authority of a Divine institute would certainly be unable to sustain itself. The passage in question is the only one where any such officer is named in the Scriptures, and there not in the form of a permanent institute, or a command to be observed, but only in an incidental, and certainly in a very ambiguous way. All



commentators and critics, so far as I have noticed—except Presbyterians—understand the place not as referring to two classes of officers, but to presbyters, on the one hand, who paid paramount attention to matters of government—to “ruling well,” and, on the other hand, to another portion of the same class of officers, who, while they did this—“ruled well”—also diligently “labored in word and doctrine.” It can hardly be supposed, that if the apostle had intended to institute this as a permanent and important office in the Church, he would have alluded to it but once, and then darkly and vaguely.

This question about lay elders was pretty largely debated in a General Assembly held in Glasgow, Scotland, November 21, 1638, by the Presbyterian party on the affirmative side, and the bishops, the King’s Commissioner—Earl Hamilton—and others, in opposition. In the report of that discussion, (as given largely by Monteith, fol. 34, etc.,) I find no claim for the order as one Divinely instituted, but chiefly the safer and more valid plea of long usage and expediency. In that Assembly Dr. Balkanqual, Dean of Durham, gave out the challenge, that “he would maintain against the most learned of

the Assembly, that neither the *name* nor the *office of lay elder* had ever been heard in any council, or in any particular church, before Calvin." (Monteith, p. 35.) The only reply to this challenge was an intimation from the Moderator—Alexander Henderson—that it was not courteous in Englishmen to come into Scotland to impugn the Church polity of that country. True, the Assembly in 1641 declared that they "were as much persuaded that the ecclesiastical government by presbyteries and Assemblies was *ordained by God*, as that episcopacy was the mere invention of man;" yet the existence of such bodies does not necessarily imply lay elders as a component element in them.

The truth is, this system makes lay elders an order of the permanent gospel ministry; not of the *word*, but of *government*, etc.; for if the original deaconship, as comprehending table-serving duties in chief, was styled a *ministry*, and they called *ministers*, in the primitive Church, the like character and title cannot be denied to a permanent office invested with higher functions. In that view of the subject it comes to this, that the government under notice is wholly a government of ministers, excluding

the laity proper entirely, except in the matter of electing this lower order of ministers, styled "ruling elders." Yet, as the restrictions we have noticed as being on the ministry, apply only to the ministry of the word and sacraments, I see not that the instituting of this governing ministry, by the Church, is in violation of any law of Christ. If a Church deem it better to have a standing jury for all the Church trials that may occur in a lifetime, and at one time to elect the same men to represent them in all the sessions, presbyteries, synods, and Assemblies perpetually, instead of coming back to the society for renewal of authority, or for new agents or servants on the occurrence of every new demand, I suppose her right to do so cannot be justly impeached. If, on the one hand, there may come up cases for trial in which their interests may be concerned or their feelings involved to an extent that might cause them to be challenged off juries in other cases, on the other hand they must be supposed to be much more familiar with canon law and the principles of its just application than men suddenly taken up for the occasion; and being under solemn vows and special consecration for the

work, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they would feel its responsibility more seriously than they otherwise should.

The Methodist mode of proceeding, by the judgment of the society, is a little more in harmony with republican notions, and with the practice of the primitive Church, as before quoted from Lord King; yet neither is the practice of the primitive Church nor of civil republics authoritative and binding on the Churches of our day, any further than as they may lead suggestively to the adoption of measures and modes of process calculated to advance the cause of Christ through the operations of the Church. I think, at the same time, that the Methodist plan is, upon the whole, a very safe and judicious system. We shall take a running sketch of its processes in the matter now being considered.

Every member of the Methodist Church is placed under what may be called the *sub-pastoral* care of a *leader*, whose duty it is, so far as practicable, to see each member of his class once a week, that he may "advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort them as occasion may require." By this means many minor offences are corrected without going any farther. It is also his duty to see his pastor once a week, when he can, and

to report to him "any that walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd." The causes of these complaints may be various, and the proceeding must vary accordingly. In cases of personal offences, or of such as do not demand an investigation for the honor of the Church, the course is that prescribed in Matt. xviii.: The minister must visit and admonish him; if he still prove impenitent, the minister must take one or two others with him, and if still he cannot be reclaimed, the case must come to a formal trial. If the offence charged be of gross and scandalous character, a public process may be called for, by the honor of the Church, or by the character of the member. In either of the cases above, the accuser and accused should be brought face to face, before the society, or a select number—a committee.

The instances will ever be rare in which it will be expedient or desirable to call together a whole society of say fifty, one hundred, or perhaps five hundred members to sit on a trial. But who is to be the judge of that expediency? Ordinarily when there is a choice of tribunals the election is with the accused—I speak of the rule in criminal jurisprudence—but in this case it seems to me it should be determined, if pos-

sible, by agreement between the accused and the judge—the pastor—agreeably to the reason of the case. But as the inconvenience and general impracticability of the measure has rendered the rule virtually inoperative and obsolete, there is no necessity to settle a point not called for in practice. But how is the committee—the jury—to be selected? The rule is not very full and explicit on this point, and where this is the case, I suppose a safe general guide is found in following the principle of action in civil and criminal courts. The accused should not, of course, be allowed to pack a jury of his friends, and so defeat the ends of justice; nor should the judge, nor the accuser, nor any one else, be allowed to select those who are prejudiced against the accused. The practice of the Church, under the better class of administrators, is, that men are called to sit on the case by the pastor, and the accused is allowed to challenge *for cause*, but not allowed a *peremptory* challenge. If he can show any good reason why a juror should not sit on the case, he should be rejected, but an objection without cause is not entitled to be regarded. Before the tribunal so constituted, the accused has a right to be heard in his own defence, and to have his witnesses from within and without

the Church, and to cross-examine the witnesses for the prosecution. The case then goes to the jury or committee, and they decide that the accused is or is not guilty of the charge; and if guilty, whether the crime is or is not such as to exclude from the kingdom of grace and glory. If it is, then, says the law, "the preacher in charge shall expel him;" that is, shall, as the presiding judge, pronounce sentence on the offender. If the condemned person be dissatisfied with the verdict, he may signify his wish to appeal, and in that case it goes up to an appellate tribunal, hereafter to be noticed.

But a large proportion of difficulties and strifes among Church members, and a large amount of complaints among them, arise out of business relations and transactions, and for these also provision is made. When a case of this sort occurs, implicating the character or affecting the confidence and harmony of members, the minister, if he cannot bring about an adjustment himself, requires that it shall be settled; and for this purpose, each of the parties is to choose an arbiter, and these two to choose a third, who shall decide the matter in controversy. If either party be dissatisfied with the decision, he has the right to take the case to a higher

court—the quarterly conference—and if that body find just ground for it, they will grant a new investigation of the matter, by five arbiters, chosen as above, and their decision is final; for a refusal to submit to it is regarded as contumacious of the Church authority, and the refusing party treated accordingly. Other shades of difference in the mode of treatment, as in case of refusing to pay just debts, dishonest insolvencies, etc., it is not necessary to our present purpose to review.

The object of Church discipline is to protect the purity and honor of the Church, and the character of its innocent members: accordingly, not only is a fair trial provided for, but, as we said, an appeal also is the constitutional right of the condemned member, and a review of the case is the right of the Church, before another judicatory. That appellate court is the quarterly conference, which is composed of the preacher or preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of a circuit or station. This, for a private member, is the court of last resort: the decision by it in his case is final.

Several of the denominational Churches make a distinction between the punishment of suspension from the sacraments, and entire expulsion



from the Church. For this I find no authority in the Scriptures nor in the early primitive Church, and no such distinction is recognized in the Methodist Church, as it regards members. The case of a minister is different; he may be punished by suspending him from the exercise of his functions, while still he may remain a member of the Church; but if a member be suspended from the sacraments, to what does it amount but an actual cutting off from the Church? He is not now, as formerly, prohibited the common privileges allowed to all, of hearing the gospel, the prayers of the Church, etc.

It seems likely that in any case in which this milder form of excommunication would have a reclaiming effect, the admonitions and reproofs which are given before this extremity is reached would bring him to penitence.

But in *this* all Churches agree, that when it has become necessary to cut one off from the Church, he must remain in that state until he shall evince a penitent spirit and proper reformation of life.

## CHAPTER VII.

## RECEIVING PERSONS INTO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

WHAT has been said in the early part of these remarks about a Divine call to the ministry, need not be repeated here, yet should not be lost sight of in the present inquiry. It is not the actual call to the ministry that we have now to consider, but the manner of formally acknowledging that call, and of giving the Church's sanction to the exercise of that office by such as profess to be called of God to the work.

It would seem that the apostles and evangelists, on planting Churches, without much formality appointed or ordained from among the converts such as they believed to be called of God, to take charge of the rest, and then went on to plant other Churches; and such is the statement of Clemens, who lived contemporaneously with the apostles. So Paul and Barnabas

“ordained elders in every Church” where they went, and Titus was “left at Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city.” In the time immediately succeeding the apostles, the custom appears to have differed according to the various circumstances of the Churches. Where an isolated Church lost its pastor by death, and there were no other ministers belonging to their Church, the body of the Church—by *church*, meaning of course the charge of one pastor—appear to have designated some one whom they judged to be called to the work, to take the place of the deceased pastor. If there was a subordinate minister, or more than one, of their parish, the selection was made from such as were already in the ministry; but if there was a regular college of elders, they appointed and ordained one of their number to be the pastor or bishop, and selected another—a new man—to fill the vacancy thus created in the board. And this, according to St. Jerome, was the usage in the Church of Alexandria for a period of two hundred years onward from the time of the apostles. When a person was selected for pastor, the pastors of the neighboring Churches were called in to set him apart for the sacred office—except in case of

Alexandria or like ones, where the board of elders exercised this power. The Church then, it appears, nominated a man for the ministry, and the ministers of the vicinity put him regularly into office.

After some time the clergy claimed all this power as properly belonging alone to them; and as early as about A. D. 365, the Council of Laodicea enacted in their thirteenth canon that "The multitude are not to make elections of those who are to be appointed to the sacerdotal order." A little later and the power was claimed by the bishops. When the Church was taken under the protection of the civil authorities, and the clergy become rich and influential, this very important patronage of the bishops began to arouse the envy of temporal princes, who saw how available it could be made in their hands in advancing their schemes of ambition and aggrandizement; and the contest carried on for centuries between prelates and princes for a power rightfully belonging to neither, forms one of the most curious chapters of history. Ambitious kings became zealous for the rights of the laity, whose guardians and representatives they claimed to be, and sordid bishops were seized with holy horror at the sacrilege of wresting from the hands

of the ministry what Christ had committed to their keeping; yet, when the king got possession of this power, he was the only *layman* who was permitted a participation in it, and when the pope or chief bishop obtained it, his solicitude for the rights of the other clergy at once abated. After the long struggle, these conflicting claims have been singularly compromised. In Roman Catholic countries, generally, the power of appointment is in the king, while the empty right of confirming or ratifying is with the pope. In Rome, however, the *pope* is the *king*, and in Great Britain the *king* is the *pope*; so that in those countries, the rights of both *ministry* and *laity* are beautifully represented, as the pope in the one, and the king in the other, professes to be the representative of both orders—at least, so in effect.

The North British Review, in giving a synopsis and brief review of Rosmini's Treatise, speaking of these opposite claims, says: "First the consent of the lay power (*i. e.*, the king) was required to every ordination; and this consent grew into the right to nominate; and right to nominate became power to sell the benefices."—*North British Review*, vol. x. p. 267. On the other hand he says: "But in the Church her-

self there was a decline from the early rule of canonical election. The people were gradually excluded; then part of the clergy, till at last the fourth Council of Lateran restricted the election of bishops to the canons of the cathedral."

A modified and moderated form of these extreme theories may be stated in something like the following manner: "Christ has committed all Church power to the hands of the ministry, and especially whatever pertains to its own perpetuation and succession; therefore the ministry only have a right to act in the authorizing of ministers." On the other hand: "All men are by nature equal, and all Christians are Christ's freemen; therefore every Christian is the equal of every other Christian, whether layman or minister, and has an equal right to participate in the work of constituting ministers."

The first of these theories errs, as I think, in taking for granted the very thing to be proven in the controversy—that Christ bestowed *all* Church power on the ministry, and which, wherever embraced, must, in consistency, degenerate, or rather develop and mature, into ecclesiastical aristocracy, or spiritual despotism.

The capital error in the latter theory consists in predicating equality of ecclesiastical rights of

natural and Christian equality, whereas these rights rest on entirely different bases, as has been shown elsewhere.

Let the first remember that Christians, as such, have important rights with regard to the ministry at whose hands they are to receive the word and ordinances; and let the second bear in mind, that rights which Christ has vested in the ministry, as such, they have no power, in virtue of being on equal ground with ministers in the rights of citizens or of Christians, to usurp or to disturb; no more than natural and civil equality confers on a citizen equality of right in a convention of physicians or in a medical consultation. The first claims a universal power on the basis of a restricted grant; the second reasons from premises natural and civil, to ecclesiastical conclusions. A little candid examination would probably convince us that the truth lies between these extremes; and that, while the ministry is chiefly concerned and chiefly empowered in matters relating to the institutions of the Church, and especially to the ministry itself, the Church at large also has rights and interests in the premises, and cannot be rightfully excluded from all participation in the matter.

We find but little that bears on this subject

in the Holy Scriptures, and what we do find is rather incidental than in the form of instruction or command for the governing of the Church in after-time, yet what we have there may suggestively indicate the general course of propriety in proceedings of this class. When it was found inconvenient for the ministers commissioned by the Lord Jesus to continue in the discharge of all the duties which had at first attached to their office, on account of the great multiplying of disciples, we have a sufficiently full record, in the sixth chapter of Acts, of the proceedings by which necessary provision was made for serving the Church. First, the ministry determined on the existence of a necessity for an additional class of officers in the Church, and accordingly resolved to institute a new order of ministers, to whom should be committed a part of the work which had, up to that time, been performed by the general ministers of religion. Having resolved to institute the order of deacons as an inferior ministry, they next "called the multitude of the disciples unto them," and having stated the necessity of a new order, they proposed that the "multitude"—the laity—should "look out," select and nominate, suitable persons for the office, who should be "men of *honest report*, full of



the *Holy Ghost* and *wisdom*." In the third place, the laity "chose" the suggested number of candidates, and presented them to the apostles—the ministry. And finally, the ministry solemnly set those persons apart for their holy office, by prayer and imposition of hands. In this instance, the ministry exercised the right of instituting a new order of ministers, when demanded by necessity or convenience, and of indicating the essential qualifications required in those who should officiate in it, as also the right of formally and solemnly inducting the new ministers into office by the rite of ordination; and the people exercised the right of seeking out and nominating to the ministry such persons for the office as, from an intimate acquaintance with their piety and talents, they judged to be well qualified for the discharge of its duties.

In the early primitive Church, when Church action was of necessity chiefly congregational, it would seem that the people selected and nominated persons to be ministers, and presented them to the ministry for approval and ordination. Next followed the plan of granting ministering authority by a presbytery composed of the ministry and select laymen of the parish, and then the minister elect was presented to the people he

was to serve, for their approbation, before he received ordination. See Lord King's Primitive Church, chapter v. But without pausing to notice the contests between regal and papal usurpations—to which we have before alluded—for the power of conferring ministerial orders, we come at once to consider the rules and usages of some of the modern Churches with regard to this matter.

In the Church of England, admitting to "holy orders" is entirely with the bishop, who is himself a creature of the crown. The other clergy have no rights in the premises, for these are all merged in the powers of the bishop, who is appointed by the king to exercise rights and powers for the entire ministry. The laity, too, are entirely excluded, because all the lay power is claimed by the king, who is a layman possessing supreme spiritual power *ex officio*. In this system of polity, the features of apostolic and early primitive usage are wanting entirely. In truth, it is part and parcel of the state machinery, and is of course made to conform to political purposes and interests. Not the least remarkable defence of this polity is a recent one in which it is held up as a model of liberality for other Churches, and particularly the Meth-

odist. See Wesley and Methodism, by Isaac Taylor.

In the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States we find a Church polity more liberal and equitable than that last noticed. The bishop, to be sure, not only confers orders by the act of consecration, but it is his right to decide on the merits of the candidate, and admit or reject according to his judgment; yet the candidate must come to him with a recommendation from the standing committee of the diocese, a part of which is, or may be, made up of laymen. Canon ix., sec. 2, of 1841.\* Besides, in the examinations of the candidate, the bishop must be assisted by two or more presbyters. Canon v., section 1.

There are other usages in that Church leaning in the same liberal direction, among which may be named the inquiring of the congregation, before ordaining a man, if they know of any impediment which should prevent his ordination.

---

\* It is but just to remark, that the committee have not a right to recommend a candidate to the bishop unless he be first recommended to them by the minister and vestry of his parish; or, where this cannot be, from twelve members and one presbyter of the Church. Canon xv. of 1832.

In the Presbyterian Church in the United States, license to exercise the functions of the ministry is granted by the presbytery. "A presbytery consists of all the ministers, and one ruling elder from each congregation, within a certain district." See Form of Church Government, chap. x. The candidate is required to present testimonials of good character and Church membership; but nothing from the laity is required before bringing the case into presbytery. In that body, the ruling elders indirectly represent the laity: I say *indirectly*, because those elders are not elected to the presbytery specifically, but are elected and ordained for general purposes, under a life-tenure, as a sort of governing ministry, and they have seats in the presbytery in virtue of their office, and not by election or appointment for that special service. This plan conforms in name, and to some extent in form, to a usage found in portions of the primitive Church.

The regulations of the Methodist Church bearing on this subject are now to be noticed. When a man thinks himself called to the ministry of the word, if his piety and understanding be such as to corroborate that impression, he is usually placed in the leadership of a class, where he has

opportunity for the practical improvement of his talents. If he acquit himself well there, the next step commonly is to give him license as an exhorter—a preparatory office not very unlike that of lector in the primitive Church, and conferred by the pastor on the recommendation of either a leaders' meeting or a class—both composed of lay members. Having in that office given indications of talents and promise of usefulness, his case comes before a meeting of lay leaders, or, where no such exists, of the whole society of which he is a member. Discipline, page 34. Thus recommended by the laity, he goes before the quarterly conference—a body composed of the preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of a circuit or station. On an average, I suppose, more than three-fourths of the members of this body are laymen. This gives to the lay element a preponderance which we do not find in any of the Churches had under notice. Indeed, if this were a full investiture of ministerial authority, and not a probationary licensure preparatory to the full ministry, I should feel myself at fault in an attempt to justify so decided a lay preponderance, from either precept or precedent; but as the investing of the candidate with complete ministerial powers belongs

to the annual conference, which is a body composed of ministers exclusively, it seems but proper that the first recommendation should come from a body of laymen—as in the instance cited from Acts vi.—and that the probationary licensure should come from a mixed body in which the lay element predominates. As a layman he is endorsed and recommended by his brethren of the laity ; as a probationer for the ministry, and, as we may say, in a transition state, he is approved and accredited by a mixed body, but composed chiefly of laymen ; as a minister, his character is passed upon only by ministers.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR THE MINISTRY.

WITH regard to the qualifications required of candidates for the ministry, there is general agreement as to the essential things; and so too in a good degree, respecting the agency and forms employed in actual ordinations.

Respecting the first, the principal things required are mature age and Christian experience, a sound understanding, and a good share of knowledge, piety, freedom from worldly cares, and a state of trial in which to give "full proof of their ministry."

1. *Mature age and experience.* "Not a *novice*, lest, being lifted up with pride," etc. 1 Tim. iii. 6. Tertullian jeers the heretics for admitting "raw and inexperienced clerks" into holy orders. The third canon of Laodicea, and the eightieth apostolic canon, are to the same effect. The thirty-fourth canon of the Church of England requires the candidate to be twenty-

three years of age before ordination. And the eighth canon (of 1832) of the Protestant Episcopal Church requires the applicant for orders to be at least twenty-one years old. The Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches designate no specific age, but only such qualifications as imply ripeness of experience.

2. Respecting the sum of learning required, the Holy Scriptures are not definite and specific, yet enjoin that the candidate should be a man of "wisdom," (Acts vi.); "Apt to teach," (1 Tim. iii. 2;) must "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," etc. 2 Tim. ii. 15.

In the primitive Church, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others, advocate learning, and especially logic, as not only useful but necessary for the ministry, while Tertullian, owing to the abuse of philosophy by pagan enemies, was strongly opposed to "human learning." All, however, concurred in regarding knowledge in Christian theology as indispensable in the ministry. The Church of England requires the candidate to have "taken some degree of school in a university, or, at least, be able to yield an account of his faith in Latin—and to confirm the same by sufficient testimony out of the Holy



Scriptures." Can. xxxiv. The Protestant Episcopal Church demands of a candidate evidence "that he is a graduate of some university or college, or, at least, he must satisfactorily sustain an examination in Natural and Moral Philosophy, Rhetoric, and in the Greek and Latin tongues." Canon ix., (of 1841,) sec. 3. These requirements, however, the bishop may dispense with under certain circumstances. *Ibid*, sec. 4. In the Presbyterian Church the candidate is "required to produce a diploma of bachelor or master of arts—or, at least, to have gone through a regular course of learning." And he is to be *tried* "as to his knowledge of the Latin language, and the original languages in which the Holy Scriptures were written—the arts and sciences, natural and revealed theology," etc. Form of Ch. Gov., chap. xiv.

In the Methodist Church there is a different rule of action and mode of proceeding: nothing is unchangeably stereotyped, but a discretionary power is recognized, to be exercised agreeably to circumstances. It is well understood that not one of a hundred of those who pursue a regular course of college study ever becomes a critical scholar in the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, but rely on the expositions of learned

commentators with as much dependence as those do who have not pursued such studies at all; hence the study of those languages is not made a *sine qua non* to the ministry; nor is even the Latin, which, though no way connected with original Scriptures, is regarded by some of the Churches as indispensable. Methodists value the learning of the schools, and are perhaps behind no other Church in the number of their colleges and institutions of learning, yet, finding nothing in the Scriptures, nor in the purer primitive Church, nor in the reason of the case, to assure them that the Holy Ghost cannot call one to the work of the ministry without calling him also to devote five or six years to the study of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—never to be mastered by him, seldom to be referred to after passing through the course, and usually forgotten in a less time than was devoted to their attainment—do not therefore regard these as essential. We have seen instances in which uneducated men, approaching middle age, believing themselves called of God to preach the word, have appropriated several years to the attainment of a shallow and valueless knowledge of those languages—because without this they would not be allowed by their Church to obey

the call of God; and we have seen them enter upon the ministry deplorably ignorant of the essential learning they might have acquired in their own language, and, indeed, ignorant of that language itself. These may be looked on, to be sure, as extreme cases, yet they are not exceedingly rare, and they show that evil effects result from an attempt to bring ministerial qualification to a standard of unnatural uniformity, and to restrict the Spirit's call to a human gauge.

Experience has taught Methodists the necessity, expediency, and advantages of a more liberal and natural policy—a policy which, while it requires nothing as essential to the ministry whose chief utility is to give it an unreal reputation for learning, strictly enjoins and perseveringly inculcates whatever has direct practical bearings on the duties and usefulness of the sacred vocation. In carrying out such a system, it is made the “duty of the bishops to point out a course of reading and study proper to be pursued by candidates for the ministry.” *Dis.*, chap. ii., sec. 5. It is made a duty of the presiding elders “to direct candidates for the ministry to those studies recommended for them by the bishops.” *Ibid*, sec. 6. The candidate, having been endorsed by the favorable judgment of the

whole society, or of a leaders' meeting, as to his talents, piety, and knowledge, comes before the quarterly conference, where he passes a more careful and searching examination with regard to his qualification for the sacred office. If approved by that body, he is admitted as a licensee or candidate on regular probation for the ministry. On receiving satisfactory evidence of his suitableness, the quarterly conference recommends him for admission on trial in the regular [itinerant] ministry; if approved by the annual conference, a field of labor is assigned to him in which to make full proof of his ministry. The appointed course of study is enjoined on him, and at the end of a year he must pass a strict examination on that course. If his ability and proficiency give promise of usefulness, he is continued another year in the same relation; but if his examination be not satisfactory, he is either required to spend another year in perfecting himself in the studies wherein he has proved himself defective, or, if the case appear hopeless, he is discontinued. If at the end of the second year his examination by the committee be good, and his public examination before the conference satisfactory, by a vote of the conference, and the rite of ordination, he is admitted

to the first degree in the ministry—the deaconship. Still his probation, his course of study, and his examinations, are continued for two years longer, preparatory to his admission to the full ministry of the gospel.

3. This probationary training is not peculiar to the Methodist Church, but rather common to all well-ordered Churches, ancient and modern. The Apostle Paul required that “these should be first proved” before full admission into the ministry. Such was evidently the general if not the universal usage for the first three centuries. See Lord King’s *Prim. Ch.*, p. 95; *Cypr. Epis.*, 115. The same thing appears in the fourth and following centuries. See Council of Nice, Canon ii., and Eightieth Apos. Canon. The like principle is recognized by the Church of England, *Can. xxxii.* In the Protestant Episcopal Church the probation or candidacy ranges from one to three years. *Canon ix.*, sec. 7, (1841.) The Presbyterian Church has the like arrangement. *Form of Ch. Gov.*, ch. xiv., sec. 1. The principle is the same in all; but in the Methodist Church the probation is more extended, and perhaps more searching, than in the others; then, too, it is applied to the case of candidates for membership as well as for the ministry.

This last regulation, which has been strongly objected to by some, is but the carrying into effect of a principle recognized by all well-ordered Churches of every age.

4. *Piety* is required by all, in candidates for the ministry, but is a little more strenuously and perseveringly urged by the rules of the Methodist Church than any of the others.

5. *Freedom from worldly cares* is a point upon which the Church in the early ages was very particular, as one deeply involving the usefulness and the reputation of the ministry.

Cyprian (A. D. 250) declared the appointment of G. Faustinus, a trustee of the will of Bishop Victor, null and void, because a previous council had decreed that no clergyman should hold any but a sacred office. Cyp. 66 Ep. p. 195. The same principle is found in the seventh canon of Chalcedon, (A. D. 451,) and the sixth,\* eighty-first, and eighty-third Apost. Canons.

Among the declarations required of one about to be ordained a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church is one—that he “is resolved to

---

\* “Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, undertake worldly business; otherwise let him be deposed.”

devote himself *wholly* to God and his work"—the ministry—and that he "is not in debt."

As regards the advancement of persons from lower to higher order in the ministry, it is not deemed necessary to trace the analogy through the different Churches: we notice, however, one principle bearing on this subject that runs through the Methodist economy; it is this: so long as a man remains in a probationary relation to the ministry—as in the case of local licentiates, or persons on trial for the itinerancy—they remain subject to a judicatory in which the laity have a preponderance. So, a local preacher, simply, must have his license renewed yearly by the quarterly conference, and if one on trial for the itinerancy is charged with misdemeanor, or is found unsuitable for that work, he is simply dropped into the hands of that body to be finally disposed of. But when once the ministry have fairly and fully admitted a man into their number, as belonging to the ministry proper, thenceforth his case is entirely in the hands of his *peers*—his fellows in the ministry—as it respects his advancement, his deposition, and the rest.

## CHAPTER IX.

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS TO THEIR WORK,  
AND THEIR REMOVAL OR DISMISSAL FROM IT.

As we have little or nothing in the New Testament to guide Church action in the settlement and removal of ministers, the matter is left very much to expediency. The manner therefore of appointing ministers to fields of labor, as well as their removal, will naturally be in a great measure regulated by the general mode of ministerial action agreed on by a Church. So, an independent Congregational Church is shut up to a necessity of appointing its own pastor, and of dismissing him on occasion; because they can look to no other ecclesiastical authority to do those acts, for they hold allegiance to none beyond themselves. In the first ages of the Church, when Christianity was feeble, and an individual congregation was usually separated by wide distances from others—when each little company grew up by itself as a distinct



religious colony—they had, like new settlers on an extreme frontier, to look almost wholly to themselves for ecclesiastical provision and resources. Hence, we find that in those early times a particular Church did usually select some one to be their pastor; because there was no other body to select for them. Yet, when they had done so, they sent for the pastors of the neighboring Churches not too remote from them, to judge of and confirm or reject their choice, and to ordain the new minister. See *Prim. Ch.*, pp. 55, 56, etc.

But where a number of such congregational churches confederated together as one provincial or denominational Church, the rights of such local churches became materially restricted, and subordinated to the confederate power of the general body. If they still exercised the right of selecting their own pastors, it was more in the nature of a nomination to the presbytery, or synod, or bishop, than a positive appointment. Indeed, even in the simpler action of an independent local church, the neighboring pastors supplied the place of a more orderly presbytery, and their consent to the settlement of a pastor was essential to the validity of the act, for, “neither the choice of the pastors of the voicinage without

the consent of the people, nor the election of the people without the approbation of those [bishops] pastors, was sufficient and valid of itself." Lord Chanc. King, p. 58. Still more, then, when all those local churches were placed under the government of a common synod, would they be bound to conform to the will of that higher power, in the settling and dismissal of pastors. In fact, the absolute right of a congregation of laymen to appoint and constitute pastors over themselves, and on their own will to dismiss them from service, has never been acknowledged in any orderly Church, ancient or modern. Yet the modification of this right varies in different Churches, and so does the agency of control. At one period in the early history of the Church, and in some districts, the ultimate control of such appointments was in a mixed presbytery or synod, as it would seem; while a little later, the synodal power—embodying the ministerial—was represented by the bishop, as the head of the synod, and his decision in such cases, if not *sole*, was at least *final*. After the civil power became involved or identified with the ecclesiastical, and the ministers of the Church became pensioners on the revenues of the State, it soon followed that "livings" or

“benefices” fell into the hands of civil officers, and other laymen, by which it became their legal right to present the man of their own selection to the bishop to be instituted or inducted into the office and “living.” This order of things has grown to a most unscriptural mercenariness in the National Church of England, under the law of *advowson*; by which the *patron*, whose property the *benefice* is, presents to the bishop for institution, a person to whom he gives or sells the “living;” a bishop, who is the patron or owner of the *living*, bestows or sells it to whom he will, “presenting” and “*instituting*” in the same act; or, finally, the king founds a church and grants it to some nobleman or other layman, as patron, who holds, gives, or sells the living independent of any concurrence of the bishop, and without any form of induction whatever. In this form of *advowson*, the whole matter is reduced to the merest business transaction, and is divested of every semblance of sacredness, even the form: the ministry is made a subject of traffic and speculation, to the scandal of religion, and in violation of the canons of the Church, ancient and modern. Against this offence—simony—the Second Canon of Chalcedon, and the Thirtieth Apostolic, are di-

rected; and what is more remarkable is, that in this very Church of England, where church livings are advertised for sale publicly as any other property, the fortieth canon requires a most solemn oath against simony. Even in the rigid Church of Scotland, (Presbyterian,) church patronage and something like the right of advowson long existed—if indeed it does not still—though probably not to the extent of actual simony.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States is much better organized for securing purity in this department than her English mother. The minister agrees to serve a congregation, subject however to the approval of the head of the diocese; and he cannot dissolve his pastoral relation without the “concurrence of the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese,” on pain of being denied a seat in the convention; nor shall he be dismissed by his parish without such concurrence, on pain of having the parish delegation denied a seat in the convention. Can. xxxiii., sec. 1, (1832.)

In the Presbyterian Church, when a vacant congregation desires to call a particular pastor, the vote of the church is taken by a neighboring pastor called in for that purpose, who is ex-

pected to prepare a formal call to the minister elected. This can be received only through the presbytery, and it is optional with that body to present the call to the minister nominated, or to withhold it if they judge proper. If the nominee belong to a different presbytery from the congregation calling him, the call must pass through the hands of the latter presbytery over to the other; and if this body consent to the proposed arrangement, the minister is dismissed from that presbytery to the one within which he is called, so as to place him within the appointing power of the latter presbytery, by which the call is finally disposed of, and the minister, if the presbytery approve, is regularly instituted pastor of the vacant church by the direct action of the presbytery. Form of Gov., chap. xv. And when a pastor desires to resign his pastoral charge, the presbytery shall cite the congregation to appear by their commissioners, and show cause, if any they have, why the presbytery should not accept the resignation of the pastor; and if they do not appear, or do not show good cause, the resignation is accepted by the presbytery.

Here we see that the pastoral relation cannot be established between a minister and a church,

nor can that relation be dissolved, but by the action of a presbytery composed of *preachers* and *ruling* elders. From that body the minister receives his ecclesiastical authority as a pastor; and back into their hands he resigns it when the relation ceases; and in that depository it remains until the presbytery may authorize its employment in a new relation. The principle here is, that people and pastor may nominate and propose a pastoral relation, but it can be established or dissolved only by the ecclesiastical power or judicatory holding rule over the parties.

We have seen that the manner of settling and unsettling ministers will naturally be different in a federated Church comprehending many particular churches, from that in a single one of those churches acting separately and independently; and we may now notice that a marked difference in modes of appointment must obtain between Churches operating by *settled pastors*, and those operating by a system of itinerant ministerial action. In the former a minister agrees to serve one church, or a very few churches, as their pastor, and the appointment is ostensibly for life, and, though proposed by the Church and assented to by the minister, is really made by the ecclesiastical body having control of the par-

ties. Under the other plan—the itinerating—a minister is not recognized as belonging virtually to one congregation for life, but as the common property of the whole Church, and subject to be employed at such places and times as the good of the whole may appear to require. It has been objected to this system that it involves a sacrifice, or at least a waiving, of natural rights on the part of both minister and people. If this be admitted, yet it will appear that restrictions on the supposed natural right of choice are imposed by every other mode of appointment. In the first mode considered, the pastors of the “voicinage” might not approve the selection made by the congregation, and then the right of choice would be restricted, or the minister elected might prefer to serve another church, and in that case, either his right to choose his field of labor must be restricted, or the right of the church to choose their pastor must be abridged. In each of the other modes named, and in all that could be named, the right of choice is necessarily restrained, or entirely denied. And the necessity of such restriction must be perceived by every one, and, indeed, to some extent, is admitted by every one. Stillingfleet, a Church-of-England man of great liber-

ality of views, says on this point: "Granting that the people have the right of choosing their own pastors, this right being only a part of the permissive law of nature, may be lawfully restrained and otherwise determined, by those that have lawful authority over the people." *Irenicum*, p. 114, Am. Ed.

Restriction on the right of choice is unavoidable in the very nature of the case, but how far and by whose authority such restrictions may be imposed, are points worthy to be considered. If the chief object were the accommodation of a favorite, or the sale of a church "living" by the patron, that object might be well enough secured on the Church-of-England plan, of disposing of the pastorate without regard to either the choice or the profiting of the people. If it were the mutual accommodating of a single pastor and a single congregation, with, at the same time, a reasonable prospect of local usefulness on the part of the one and edification on the other part, there could be no valid objection to the making up of a conditional contract between the minister and the people—the presbytery having at the same time the right to judge of its fitness, and to give it validness and force, or to declare it null and void. But if the chief design were



not individual and local convenience, to give the whole talent and labor of the ministry to the whole Church, distributively, and to render the ministerial force—at best, unequal to the magnitude of the work to be done—effective to the greatest possible extent, then the abridgment of the right of choice on the part of both pastors and people must be considerable. We are not now to discuss the merits of an itinerant system of ministerial action and supply; it is sufficient for our present purpose that we state the fact—that the Methodist Church regards that system as the only one that can give a preached gospel to all the poor and frontier population of our extended country, and that she is pledged to push forward the system with the greatest possible vigor. With such a purpose in view, it will be perceived, at a first glance, that individual and local rights and convenience must submit to abridgment and modification for the “greatest good of the greatest number.” It requires no argument to convince any man of discernment that a practice of bargain and contract between pastors and people would inevitably break down ministerial itinerancy, as a system employing and directing the talent and labors of the entire ministry. Preachers could not be

expected to choose fields of severe toil and meagre support, nor could the people be expected to select men of small experience and moderate abilities, when there are more inviting fields on the one hand, and more commanding talents on the other, to select from. The only successful way, then, of carrying on an effective itinerant system, appears to be to go one step farther in the restriction of natural rights than Presbyterianism does, and instead of having the presbytery to ratify and confirm an agreement between pastor and people, let that body—or one in some measure answering to it—arrange the contract, if it may be so called, originally; that is, make the arrangement for assigning to pastors their work, and churches their supplies; not for life, but for a single year at a time—preachers and people consenting to the arrangement for the good of the whole.

But here is presented an apparent difficulty, which must be met: A Presbyterian presbytery may have to dispose, at one of its sessions, of a *call* tendered to one or two of its members; and this can very well be done, for all the other members of that body are either pastors already settled in congregation, or elders, not subject to such calls and presbyterial action; but at a meet-

ing of a *Methodist presbytery*—an annual conference—every member of the body has a *call* to be disposed of—not special, but general—and they are therefore not in favorable circumstances to judge and decide impartially in their own cases, and those of their brethren. How then is the difficulty to be overcome but by committing the matter of distributing the laborers to the hands of some body not personally interested in the result? And who shall it be? Not the preachers, for they are interested in the issue; not the people, for they too are interested. The General Superintendent or Bishop is not subject to appointment by the conference, has no personal interest to serve, and no natural temptation to partiality. But it is not likely that he can be so well acquainted with the talents of every preacher, and the circumstances of every charge, as to be able to suit the one to the other without serious mistakes. Where is the remedy for this defect? In the presiding eldership. These elders collectively have all the preachers of the conference under their care and supervision throughout the year; and as it is their official duty to visit every circuit and station once in three months, they must be presumed to be able to give correct information re-

specting every laborer and every field of labor within their bounds. These officers compose the advisory counsel of the bishops in making out the appointments of the preachers. But how comes the bishop to be the trustee of this important power, supposed to belong by natural right to the people and the preachers? We answer, by consent of the parties in interest. That consent was given by the preachers directly; for they adopted, or, if you prefer, enacted the regulation themselves. And this they believed they had a valid right to do, because the system pressed much more heavily on themselves than on anybody else; and because the preachers were before the members, and had therefore of necessity to adopt modes of operation under which a membership was to be collected and organized. The membership of course came into the Church under this arrangement, and their doing so was giving a virtual consent to it. But is this a valid consent, or merely a necessary and constrained one? The liberal-minded Bishop Stillingfleet says: "Nature requires that every one entering a society should consent to the rules of it." Iren. 160.

And he adds in the same place: "Our Saviour hath determined how this consent should be ex-

pressed, viz., by receiving baptism from those who have the power to dispense it." In the instance of adults this form of consent is sufficiently direct, but in the case of persons baptized in infancy something more is necessary; and accordingly when such arrive at years of maturity, they are required, in the Presbyterian Church, to pass an examination; in the Protestant Episcopal Church to reëffirm their baptismal vows in confirmation; and in the Methodist Episcopal Church, all persons on their admission into full membership are required publicly to declare their assent to the regulations of the Church, so far at least as to conform to them.

The giving of consent formally, and by vote, is not required or practiced in binding the subject to obedience in the state. The laws chiefly were made and in force before he was born, and consent is inferred from the circumstances in which he is found; but in the instance of the Methodist member his assent is explicitly given.

Even in those Churches where the pastor is elected by the people directly, members are by no means sure of their choice in a pastor; for a strong minority may be opposed to the choice of the majority, and so be defeated in getting the man of their choice; and even if the member-

ship should cast a unanimous vote for a particular man as their pastor, the presbytery, or the diocesan, may put a negative on that vote by refusing to ratify the choice of the people; or, again, the elected pastor may decline the call, and defeat the people's choice in that way. So that the absolute right of choice exists only in visionary theory, but is in fact a thing impracticable. Where, however, it is proposed to settle a pastor permanently in the same congregation, it seems reasonable that the people—who are to be restricted chiefly to the ministry of this one man permanently, perhaps for life—should have a chief participation in the selection of their pastor. But where it is proposed to give to the ministry the widest and most equitable circulation by a systematic itinerancy, I suppose greater efficiency and better results are to be expected from an arrangement by which people and preachers resign their right of choice chiefly into the hands of an independent, disinterested, and competent third party, to make from year to year the best distribution practicable of workmen to the several fields of labor:

## CHAPTER X.

## APPOINTMENTS OF MINISTERS, ETC.—CONTINUED.

THE itinerant plan of operation, as existing among Methodists, originated in what appeared to be a providential way. Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors, as ministers of the English Church, labored for the promotion of evangelical piety in that Church, and itinerated at large in doing so. Of course they selected their fields of labor without any call from the people, who had other regular pastors,—or any appointment from the regular authorities of the Church, who did not recognize this mode of ministerial operation as orderly. When lay preachers were admitted by Mr. Wesley as assistants, they were appointed to fields of labor by him; for, as they were not acknowledged as preachers by the Church to which Mr. Wesley belonged, and had no ecclesiastical authority but from him, no one but himself seemed to have any natural control of them.

So when preachers were called for in the American Colonies, Mr. Wesley appointed some of those lay assistants of his for the work. And when the number increased so as to render it impracticable for him to make all the necessary appointments on a distant continent, he designated one of those preachers as a sort of agent to appoint the other preachers to their several missions. What other course could have been adopted under the circumstances? Mr. Wesley could not do it while three thousand miles distant, and there were neither regularly organized congregational churches, nor other ecclesiastical bodies who could act in the premises. Under this system of procedure the first Methodist societies grew up in America. And when it became necessary to organize those societies into a regular denominational Church, Mr. Wesley withdrew his claim of control over them, and declared them "free to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church" in their organization. The preachers by whose labors, under this system, those societies were collected together, believing it to be the one best suited to the circumstances of the country, and the grand object of their mission, incorporated it into their permanent Church organization, and submitted them-



selves, by the arrangement, to the appointing power of a permanent officer, to whom that responsibility was intrusted. As between preachers and people, the arrangement was certainly liberal with regard to the latter, relatively; for, if the people were restricted in their choice of a preacher, the preacher was deprived of choice in the matter of selecting his field of labor. And, then, while the preacher is bound to labor wherever he is appointed, the people whom he serves are under no agreement or obligation to give him any specific amount of pecuniary support, nor, indeed, any support at all. To be sure, he is allowed to receive a certain sum, and that a very small one, but no one is legally bound to pay it to him; and if at the end of his term of service he has not received that sum, or the half or any less proportion of it, he has no further claim on the people, because they were not bound to make up the amount. This self-sacrificing system the preachers adopted at the beginning, when they had no churches to confer with in the matter; under it the Church has grown up, and to it the people have yielded a very general and cordial acquiescence.

There has, it must be confessed, been some dissatisfaction with this feature of the system,

but it has been almost wholly on the part of the preachers, upon whom it falls most heavily, and not on that of the people.

And it can hardly be regarded as less than liberal on the part of the preachers to adopt a system which subjects them to severe trials and sacrifices, while on the part of the people aggregately it imposes no sacrifice at all; for they enjoy under it the labors of the entire ministry, distributively, alternately, more surely and equitably than they could under a different system. And then, moreover, if the people should decline the services of one sent to them—should refuse to hear or fail to support him—no legal penalty attaches; but if the preacher declines the service assigned him, it is an ecclesiastical offence for which he is amenable. The people, however, are not likely to be seriously dissatisfied, for they very generally regard this arrangement as necessary to the more extensive and effectual preaching of the gospel to the destitute; and if in the services of any one minister they are not exactly suited, the certainty of change reconciles them to a present real or a fancied inconvenience. And then, too, this system of change, while it gives all the various talents of the ministry, in succession, to each church or congrega-

tion, so suits itself to the innate love of variety in human nature, as to become an important means of keeping up a lively interest in the public ministrations of the pulpit, to a much greater extent than is common where people sit under the sound of the same voice for a tedious succession of years. In relinquishing, then, a portion of what may be regarded as their natural rights "for the greatest good of the greatest number," the people lose nothing in the long run, and have surely as little cause as they have inclination to complain of the preachers for having adopted this mode of appointment at first, when it was unavoidable, and for continuing it in use for its well-proven usefulness. And the preachers have little right or privilege to complain of an arrangement which, however burdensome to themselves, is the system of their own adopting.

But we should not overlook the fact, that this same mode of appointment is recognized and practiced by other Churches, at least in the appointment of "evangelists" and missionaries. When a missionary goes out to pagan countries, or an evangelist to frontier districts, whether he be Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or of any other Church, he goes not on the election and call of a congregation or church, but by the appoint-

ment of a presbytery, diocesan or other ecclesiastical authority, to preach, make converts, and form churches among a people who as yet know nothing of the value of the gospel. True, this with them is the extraordinary course of action, and therefore not subject to the ordinary rules by which they are governed; but at the same time it is true that with Methodists the whole system is entirely missionary, and what with others is the extraordinary, with them is the ordinary course of action. If missionary *action* requires such a mode of appointment on the part of other Churches, a missionary *system* may seem to justify the like mode on the part of Methodists.

But it is said "this mode of appointing preachers to their work is anti-republican." If this were admitted, I do not know where, in the word of God, it is required that a minister of Christ shall be appointed to his field of labor precisely as a village constable in the most democratic communities, in the nineteenth century, is appointed. But why is it anti-republican as compared with the modes of other Churches? A Presbyterian or Episcopalian church or congregation has a right to express preference for a particular minister, and so has a Methodist congregation; but

this preference may be overruled by the presbytery or the bishop, as well in the first class of cases as in the latter. The will of the people will of course be considered and respected, so far as it may be deemed proper, in the one case as in the other, but that will is not authoritative in either case, but is subject to the decisions of a more potent will. It is not the rule of majority in either case, but the rule of Christian expediency and convenience. Preachers and people conjointly have clearly a right to adopt such a regulation, because *they* only are concerned in its operations,—all admitting that it violates not the Divine law; and as preachers and people with great unanimity receive it cordially and submit to it cheerfully, no other party has a valid right to object.

The absolute majority rule would as effectually break down the modes of other Churches as it would that of the Methodist Church. Indeed, its practical application is far from being universal even in the most republican governments. The entire military department is an exception, as well as some others, where prompt and efficient action is demanded. What sort of efficiency would there be in any army where every general order, every plan of attack, the selection

of every officer required for a special service, had to be submitted to the vote of the whole army? Surely very little, or rather none at all. The Church is constantly represented under the militant figure, and while it is supposed to demand the promptness and energy of military action, it is hardly unreasonable to look for some of the elements of that energy in its more concentrated power of action as provided for in its organization.

As to dismissing ministers from their pastoral charges, it is with Methodists an entirely different affair from what it is in other Churches, partaking not at all of the nature of a rupture. Where the pastoral relation is established without limit of term, and therefore for life, or until the parties grow tired of the connection, or at least one of them does so, a severance of the relation is hardly ever made by kind consent and in perfect good feeling. If the pastor wishes to change his flock, and the latter desire his continuance, his feelings, his interest in them, and perhaps his very motives, come to be impeached, or at least to be suspected; and where the desire for change is on the part of the congregation, the pastor either continues, under depressed feelings and discouragement of

spirit, or, with wounded and perhaps soured feelings, takes his departure to seek employment elsewhere. In Methodist economy, however, there is nothing of this. The pastor is appointed for a single year at a time, and at the end of that time is continued or removed as circumstances seem to advise. The term for which he was employed has expired, and separation comes, not as the result of disagreement, but by the operation of rule. The connection terminates by its own limitation, and no censure attaches to either party, and usually no feeling but of kindness prevails between them.

#### EXCOMMUNICATION OF MINISTERS.

Finding myself in danger of extending these remarks beyond the limits to which I wished to confine them, I shall, on this point, say little except what relates to the course of procedure in the trial of ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In the case of a licentiate, or of a local preacher—one not in the regular work—when an accusation is brought against such a one, if the charge be for imprudent conduct, or an offence less than immorality, he is first to be admonished by the regular pastor under whose

charge he is. If he give satisfaction, there the matter ends; if not, the admonition is to be repeated in the presence of witnesses; and if still he will not reform, he is summoned by the pastor—the preacher in charge—to appear and answer to the charge before the next quarterly conference; and that body will acquit, suspend, or expel him, as the case may require. If the charge be of an immoral or a scandalous character, the accused is brought before an examining court, consisting of three or more local preachers, with the pastor as president; and if the testimony be such as to require it, the committee will suspend him from the exercise of ministerial functions until the meeting of the next quarterly conference, by which tribunal his case is to be disposed of. If the verdict be exclusion from the Church or deposition from the ministry, he has the right of appeal to the annual conference—composed entirely of regular ministers—which is his court of last resort.

In the case of an itinerant minister, a like course is pursued: He is arraigned by a presiding elder, before a committee of his peers—itinerant ministers—by whom he is acquitted, or suspended from the ministry until the meeting of the annual conference. Here the case is



fairly tried and disposed of; and if the accused be condemned, he has the right of appeal to the General Conference. And this right of trial by a jury of his peers, and of appeal, even the supreme judicatory of the Church has not the power to take from him. If a minister were liable to be deposed or expelled by the bishop on the one hand, or by the laity on the other, he could not be said to be tried by his peers or equals. Equity and reason require that a minister's case should be passed on by ministers, and that the guilt or innocence of a layman should be judged by laymen; and these rights are jealously guarded by the law governing the case in the Methodist Episcopal Church. If, however, other Churches prefer a different arrangement, they have a right to their preference.

## CHAPTER XI.

## TEMPORALITIES OF THE CHURCH.

WE next proceed to consider the subject of Church revenues and property. The management of these for the benefit of the Church must be committed to some hands, as agents; but who are the most proper persons to be intrusted with this business? In the apostles' time there was but little of this sort of business to be done, a few contributions to aid in supporting the ministry, and for the relief of the poor, comprehending, perhaps, the whole. These offerings of charity were brought to the apostles to be applied, as is evident from the fact that their management came, after a while, to engross so much of the time of the ministry as to interfere with the paramount duty of the gospel, and to suggest the necessity of instituting a class of officers—deacons—to take special charge of this department of service. Perhaps the custom

was, that<sup>e</sup> the higher ministry held a general control of the finances of the Church, while the deacons, under the direction and oversight of the former, administered the funds for the benefit of those for whose use they were intended. Accordingly we find in the Apostolic Canons, as they are called, and which appear to have been adopted about the close of the second century, the following ordinance: "We ordain that the bishop have authority over the goods of the Church; for if he is to be intrusted with the precious souls of men, much more are temporal possessions to be intrusted to him. He is, therefore, to administer them all of his own authority, and supply those who need, *through the presbyters and deacons*, in the fear of God, and with all reverence." Canon xli. The same is in substance in the Twenty-second Canon of Chalcedon, and the Fifteenth of Ancyra. At a later and less pure period of the Church, the bishops appear to have claimed control not only of charity funds, but of whatever belonged to the Church; and the title of such property was taken in their names. And this I think is the usage in the Romish Church at the present time, so far as the laws of the countries where the property is located will permit. Even since the

publication of these thoughts was commenced, the newspapers have reported a petition of a papal archbishop to a State Legislature, the object of which was to obtain permission to have the title of Church property made directly to himself. Since the Reformation, however, except where the Church is under the control of the State, Church property and funds are generally held by trustees, in trust for the use to which they are dedicated.

As there appears to have been great misapprehension on this subject, in relation to the manner in which the property and funds of the Methodist Episcopal Church are held and appropriated, it seems proper to inquire into the matter. In doing this we shall notice the several species of property, and the manner of holding and appropriating each. And first,

*Of churches, and houses of worship.* The ordinary course of things is about this : a preacher labors in a village, town, or neighborhood, until he collects together a little society. Their convenience requires a place of worship, and they agree to contribute to this object as they are able. A lot of ground is procured on which the house is to be erected, and the preacher names, say five, seven, or nine members of the church,

whose names are inserted in the title-deed as trustees. These have sole control of the property, with only the restriction, that they are at all times to permit it to be used by a preacher regularly appointed to the charge within which it lies, for the purposes of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and executing the discipline of the Church within it. See Discipline, p. 160. And if this amount of right were not secured to the regular ministry, it would be truly a strange sort of Methodist meeting-house.

“Ay,” it is said, “but the conference, and not the people who build the house, appoints the preacher.” Very true, but so does a presbytery appoint or settle a pastor in a Presbyterian church; and is that a good reason why the trustees should not be bound to allow such Presbyterian preacher as the presbytery may appoint or approve, to exercise the functions of his office in that house? I trow not. But we follow up the history of this little church. In the beginning, when nothing was fairly organized, the pastor, as the nucleus, designated persons to serve as trustees; but if afterward a vacancy occur in the board, the preacher nominates, and the remaining trustees elect. This is the usual course, but the law lays down nothing as indis-

pensable except that the use of the house shall be secured to the regularly appointed pastor.

But the house is not yet fully paid for, and deaths, removals, etc., have so weakened the society as to leave them unable to meet the claim. To do this the property is placed under mortgage, and in the end is sold to pay the debt. After meeting all demands, there is a surplus of the proceeds of sale. This sum is placed in the hands of a steward of the society to which the house belonged, and the amount reported to the next annual conference, "which conference shall dispose of said money, according to the best of their judgment, *for the use of the said society.*" Disc. p. 165. In all this I perceive nothing oppressive or inequitable.

Next, of funds for the support of the regular ministry and the poor. This class of property is under the control of a board of stewards, as the last-named property is under that of trustees, both boards being laymen. Rather, they are *lay officers*, for though under some circumstances a minister may be a trustee or a steward, he holds such office simply as a member of the Church, and not as a minister. The Discipline fixes the salary of preachers, but this is not intended to cover house rent, table expenses, tra-

velling expenses, etc.; for a minister having a wife and five children would be entitled to a salary of say \$296. This sum, in our expensive cities, would do little more than cover the hire of a house. The stewards, therefore, are intrusted with the duty of making an allowance for the meeting of those outlays, and of providing the means of paying both that sum and the salary, or specific allowance fixed in the Discipline. So they are charged with the duty of collecting funds for the relief of the poor, and with the appropriation of such funds to the objects for which they are intended. These stewards are not only laymen themselves, as we remarked before, but they are elected to office by a body—the quarterly conference—composed chiefly of laymen.

The fund for gospel extension—the *Missionary Fund*, now claims some notice. It is raised by voluntary contributions from preachers and people, and is managed by a central board of directors or managers, no one of whom is required to be a minister, and a large proportion of whom are always laymen. These managers, in conjunction with the bishops, determine what foreign fields shall be occupied, the number of missionaries to be employed, the manner of ap-

appropriating the funds, etc. The whole arrangement is as liberal as any one would be likely to desire.

But the *Book Fund*—this is the great bug-bear. This fund was commenced in the last century by the preachers themselves, aided by the contributions of their friends. The primary object was the publication of religious and other useful books; the secondary was, to raise by that means a fund to aid in the support of worn-out preachers, the widows and orphans of deceased preachers, and to meet other necessitous cases. We see, then, that it was originated by the preachers; they taxed themselves to raise the funds, they engaged in the sale of books, by the profits of which the concern has grown to its present magnitude, and to the relief of the necessitous among them and their families the profits or produce of the enterprise were devoted from the very beginning; and, notwithstanding contributions were made by laymen, they were made in aid of a fund dedicated to the above specified uses; it is therefore specifically and emphatically, in its original design, and in the intention of all the contributors, a *preachers' fund*. And it can hardly be deemed a usurpation, or even an impropriety, that they have



all along had the special management of that fund.

It has been deemed proper to make this brief statement of the administration of the different species of property and funds of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the reason that the subject has been strangely misrepresented. All Church funds and property, it has been published to the world, belong to the bishops and the conference, and are entirely under their management and control. How utterly groundless such statements are, we have sufficiently seen in the short sketch here submitted.

On a review of the whole ground passed over—in the admission of members—in their trial and excommunication—in the reception of ministers—their appointments to fields of labor, their dismissal, and deposition, and in the management of the temporalities of the Church, I cannot perceive that in the regulations of the Methodist Episcopal Church there is any violation of the Divine constitution on the one hand, or any practical denial of important popular rights on the other.

## CHAPTER XII.

## LAY REPRESENTATION.

BUT the whole subject comes up in a more broad and general form, in which, without wading through the slower process of analyzing the ground and nature of rights and duties in detail, a grand conclusion is reached at a single bound, and the position is resolutely taken, that it is the right of the laity to be represented in the legislative, judicial, and executive departments of the Church, and if this be not granted they are wronged and oppressed.\*

---

\* The late distinguished Rev. N. Snethen, a chief leader of "Reform," in an address on that subject, in 1827, inculcates the idea that power is wrongfully in any hands where not deposited by the laity, and rightfully vested, no matter who are the holders, so that it be there by the authority of the laity. He says, that "There is nothing singular or contrary to civil or religious usage in the fact that the laws for the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church are exclusively in

We are disposed to meet this subject seriously and in the spirit of candor, for it is one of grave importance.

I think the claim, to say the least of it, is laid a little too broadly, and that in form it cannot be fairly sustained, in the strong sense in which the leading term is used.

If valid, this claim must rest on *natural* right, *civil* right, or *ecclesiastico-Christian* right, or on more than one of these. I have not taken into the enumeration *ecclesiastical* right, simply, because this by itself confers on the person becoming a member, only such grants as are accorded to members in some particular Church; and for this reason it was assumed before, that laymen have rights of higher origin.

But to resume the subject of rights as classi-

---

the hands of the travelling preachers as rulers of the Church." This circumstance, he says, "is a mere accident, and the principle of ministerial power would not be changed if they were confided in like manner to the local preachers, or the members, or a certain number of them all in conjunction. It matters not into whose hands the laws are confided, if they are bound by no other bond, the subjects of the laws have no hold on them, by which to bind them peaceably to keep the peace." Bond of Peace, p. 13.

fied above. The law of nature warrants a man in defending his person, his goods, and his reputation, and in seeking his own happiness; but in a state of civil society these rights are materially modified and restricted. *There*, it is one's civil right, not to protect *himself* in person, property, and reputation by his own power and resources, but to *be protected* in these by the government; and to pursue his own happiness, not regardless of all others, but only in a manner not conflicting with the happiness of other citizens. He loses, or parts with, his natural right of self-protection in its full extent, and gains by the surrender the protection of the whole power of the government to which he makes the surrender, and which he becomes bound to obey. But the loss or surrender is in *form*, not in essential *substance*; for while he surrenders the broad right of *self*-protection, he secures thereby a much more powerful protection. The capital thing is *protection*, and this is not lost, but only made more secure, by vesting it in stronger hands. Protection, in its various phases, is the law of nature, and the grand purpose of government; and as this is but made stronger in passing from a natural state, to one of well-ordered civil society, it seems but reasonable that it should at

least not be weakened in passing into an ecclesiastical society. We have said that civil rights cannot constitute the basis of ecclesiastical, as natural rights do of civil, and this is so, not only because they have different and distinct spheres of operation, but because they operate concurrently, and independently at the same time. This is not true of the natural and civil, for where one of these has full authority, the other must be suspended. As thus, it cannot be one's right to protect himself and his interests, of his own will and in his own way, and at the same time to enjoy the full protection of the civil government; for the latter right depends on a suspension or waiving of the former, though based on it. But in the other case, one may enjoy the full benefits of civil right, and of ecclesiastical, at the same time; because the one does not depend on the other, and the existence of the one in no way calls for the suspension of the other, as in the instance of civil and natural rights. In passing into a state of civil society we pass *out* of that of *nature*; but in passing into a gracious state, and into Church society, we do not pass out of the *civil*; because the two are concurrent and coëxistent, and do not conflict, any more than the right of eating food conflicts with

the right of drinking water. It is a man's civil right to be protected by the government, in his person, property, reputation, and pursuit of happiness as a *citizen*; but the same man is, it may be, a Church member, and in this relation has a right of protection, not in life, limb, estate, and *civil* good name—because these are the care of the civil government, and are guaranteed to him by it—but in his reputation as a *Christian* and *Church member*, and in his right to pursue his own happiness as a *religious man*.

If we should leave out of view what is of *Divine* authority in relation to the Church, then we would say that civil and ecclesiastical rights both are based on the law of nature, and not either one or the other; for, if the natural right of self-protection suggest that of *State* protection under the civil government, it may as well be supposed to suggest the right of *Church* protection, under the ecclesiastical. The law of nature then seems to suggest the right of protection, in every state and relation of society, and of course in the ecclesiastical; but it suggests nothing with regard to *means* or *modes* of protection, and therefore nothing on the present question of representation.

Christ has ordained the institution of a Church

in the world, made up of those who sincerely profess his religion, and has granted to the members thereof all needful privileges and securities. But as a man placed in a state of nature, or in solitude, can enjoy no civil rights, and must make the best he can of natural ones; so a Christian placed where no other Christians are, and where, therefore, no Church organization exists, can enjoy no *ecclesiastical* rights, but must content himself to hold solitary communion with his God by faith, prayer, and obedience, until he can come into union with the visible Church. In the first case, the man in a state of nature not only has no rights, but *can* have none until he promises obedience and swears allegiance to the government with which he desires to become united; but in the other case, the *solitary Christian* is already in union with the Head of the Church, and to him has sworn allegiance, and is therefore a true member of the spiritual and invisible Church of Christ, fully entitled to all the rights of membership in his visible Church so soon as he can come into personal connection with the household of faith. He has the title—the *deed of feoffment*, and lacks only actual possession—*livery of seizin*. Now in entering into actual Church relations,

he is fully entitled to the benefit of the law of nature which we have been considering; and therefore to the selection of such ecclesiastical organization as he believes to be best constructed for the protection of his Christian character, and the promotion of his religious happiness—such organization or Church not being in opposition to the Divine constitution. And if that particular Church to which he feels bound to attach himself, is not so well regulated for the protection of its members, the advancement of their religious happiness, and general helping forward of the cause of Christ, as it might be, I see not but that, by the law of nature and the Divine constitution, he has a valid right to labor for its improvement, so that it but be done in a manner to preserve harmony, and keep the law of charity. Now, his *Christian* right to membership in the visible Church, and his *ecclesiastical* right, as a member of a particular Church, to enjoy its privileges, and to labor for its improvement and for the advancement of the cause of Christ through it, is what, for want of a better name, I have called “ecclesiastico-Christian rights.” And I have coupled the two terms, because, as we have seen, there may exist Christian rights where no ecclesiastical ones exist, and



because the sum of rights inquired after can be come at only in a union of the two claims.

But we come to inquire, what right, interest, or privilege necessary, is not secured to the membership in the provisions and proceedings which have been considered somewhat in detail? The individual protection of the member, the purity of the Church, the supply of ministers and means of grace, all appear to be well provided for in the system of polity we have had under notice. 'What more is wanting?

The answer is, "Tyrannical governments often practice a liberal policy of administration, but this does not furnish a safeguard against oppression, so long as the power of government is vested in irresponsible hands. The regulations and course of action treated of are very good, at least in the main, and we would not change them; but the *people* did not make them, and cannot modify them; and we regard a popular representation in the different departments of government as essential to protection and purity."

I am willing to see as liberal a Church polity as may be consistent with the original charter, and with the highest efficiency and usefulness of the Church; but when it is recollected that the whole constitution, the moral statutes, the

sacraments, the primary element, and the appointed instrumentalities, are definitely settled by authority that the Church dares not interfere with, and that the whole ground of doctrines, means of grace, and mode of ministerial action and extension is settled by unanimous consent, so far as the Methodist churches are concerned, and nothing left open but economic details and administration, it must be seen how very little there is to be provided for, and especially that can be assigned to a legislative department proper. As it respects the executive or administrative department, in every regular Church in the world this is, and has from the beginning been conceded to the ministry, and indeed could not be otherwise vested consistently with the Divine commission ; and it does not therefore demand any further notice.

Respecting the judicial branch of Church power, the participation of the laity is as direct as could be reasonably required, and, I think, more so than that of the people is in the judiciary of our own model republic, as may be seen by a comparison. The preachers are the judges or presiding officers of our Church courts. How came they to this office ? The laity recommend a man for license to preach, the quarterly con-

ference, chiefly composed of laymen, grant him that license, and the same body recommend him to the annual conference for admission into the itinerancy, knowing that if admitted, by that admission he becomes a judge in inferior judicatories, and a member or a constituent of the higher ones. Here are three distinct acts of the laity in making this officer, while the only part the itinerant ministry has in the matter is that of receiving him whom the laity have thrice recommended. The ministry holds a like relation to the judiciary in all other regular Churches. But how is a judge of our free republic made? Thus: the people elect electors, the electors elect a president, and the president nominates the judge. Then, again, the people elect State representatives, these elect United States' senators, and the Senate confirms the president's nomination of judge. So the people neither elect the judge, nor the man who nominates, nor the men who confirm, while in the other case the laity elect directly, only subject to the confirmation or rejection of the annual conference, as the nomination of the president is to that of the Senate.

But still it is objected that the analogy fails from the fact that the preacher, who becomes

the judge, has a controlling power over the persons and collective bodies whose votes are necessary to his own official existence. Of this we remark, first, he must pass through the hands of those laymen and lay bodies before he can have any control at all; therefore has no personal interest in such power, for his personal interest in the matter ceases before his power begins. Secondly, his supposed absolute power in the premises is after all a very restricted affair. (1.) The class, which recommends in all cases, is a primary body of the people, over whose votes he has no right of control whatever. (2.) The quarterly conference comprehends leaders, stewards, local preachers, and exhorters: in the appointment of the first he has a *legal* power, but hardly a *moral* one, for few men, even if so inclined, would hazard the consequences of making an appointment that had not at least the tacit approval of the class; in the creation of stewards his only power is that of nomination, and the quarterly conference may elect or reject at discretion; in the licensing of local preachers he has no power beyond that of giving his vote as a member of the quarterly conference; and, though he has the power of granting temporary license to exhorters, the class—except in cities,

etc., where classes are represented by a leaders' meeting—must first recommend, and then the ratification of his act is finally with the quarterly conference.

I do not say that the stewards might not be elected without the preacher's nomination; yet, as the stewards should be dispersed through different parts of the circuit, and as no one commonly has so good a knowledge of the most suitable men for the office in all parts of a large field of labor as the minister, I see no great necessity for change at this point. Leaders too might be elected by the classes directly; yet, as these have often to be appointed in new and frontier places, for classes which are imperfectly formed, and have frequently to be brought from other societies; as the leader is the preacher's deputy to perform certain portions of the pastoral work for him, and has to make report to him; and finally, as in a large proportion of cases where the experiment has been tried the classes have declined the exercise of the power, and have required that the pastor should actually or at least virtually appoint the leader, I am not prepared to say that even this change is called for at present by either the wants or wishes of the Church.

If it should be said that the laity vote in re-

commendation of a man as a *preacher* simply, and not as a *judicial* officer, the ready answer is,—so also the people vote for a representative simply as a State legislator, and not as a judge, as an elector of judges, nor with any direct reference to the judiciary, yet to this department of the government he holds an important relation. In the one case and the other, intelligent people know that when they vote for a man to be a representative in the State, or a minister in the Church, he is subject to be called to act in such relation to the civil or the ecclesiastical judiciary as has been alluded to above—and will act accordingly.

But it is said, the people have no authoritative voice in the matter after all, for, if a majority of the people vote for a man to be president he thereby becomes president, but if a majority of the people vote for a man to become a minister, and so a *Methodist judge*, the preachers may reverse the whole, and render the popular voice nugatory. This is not, however, a fair statement of the case, for the popular vote for president is in no sense authoritative in determining the selection of a *judge*, the thing now being considered. The people vote for a president knowing that he will probably have judges to

nominate; but that fact gives them nothing of authority in making such nominations; nor does even the nomination by the president make a judge, unless confirmed by a coördinate department of government. There is nothing absolute indeed in people, president, or senate in this matter. The people can make a president, and so vest in a particular man the right to nominate a judge, but they cannot nominate or confirm him: the president can nominate, but cannot give himself that power, or confirm his own act: the Senate can confirm a nomination, but have no power to make one, or to authorize another officer to do so. So the laity can nominate a man for license to preach, but can neither give him such license nor admit him to the full ministry by election and ordination: a quarterly conference cannot grant such license without the nomination or recommendation of the laity, nor can they admit to orders, or to the itinerancy: the annual conference can do both the last acts, with the precedent concurrence of the other two departments, but can neither nominate, recommend originally, nor admit to a state of licensure. Now, if it were so that the people nominated or recommended a president, and the Senate had to ratify and confirm the nomination

in order to his being made president, and that, on his being so confirmed in office, he became supreme judge in virtue of his presidential office, then the people would be more nearly in that relation to the national judiciary in which the Methodist people stand to their Church judiciary; but as it is, it appears clear to my mind that the Methodist people are in nearer relation to their Church judiciary than the people of this country are to our national judiciary.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## LAY REPRESENTATION—CONTINUED.

BUT the grand point is representation in the law-making department; or if this term be objected to, then in the chief council or synod of the Church—the General Conference.

Let us then inquire as to the practice of the Church respecting this matter. The New Testament affords us no directions on this subject, and no example in point. We have, to be sure, in the fifteenth of Acts an account of a consultation held to settle a controversy that grew up at Antioch respecting the observance of Jewish rites, and this has sometimes been called a council or synod. But when we recollect that it was called informally to meet an emergency; that it was composed of whomsoever of experienced Christians happened to be present at the time; that it never met afterward; and withal, that its decision is supposed to have been dictated by

the Holy Spirit of inspiration, we cannot regard it as affording us any light on the point under notice. Laymen were no doubt present, and, though nothing is said of any part they took in the deliberations, it was certainly proper to consult with them, and to obtain their views—as it is still.

From that time on till about the middle of the second century we hear nothing of councils or synods, general or local, but Church matters seem to have been managed by congregations acting independently, and of course, necessarily and properly, the laity participated in those proceedings; but in what manner and to what extent is uncertain. Then came into use district or local consultations, in which several congregations took part. There is every reason to believe that to at least some of these, laymen were admitted. See Prim. Ch., p. 133. But it appears that when they came to take on a settled form and to hold regular sessions, they were composed only of the ministry. And this seems to have been the case quite early, for about A. D. 250 Firmilian writes, that “the *bishops* and *presbyters* met every year to dispose those things which were committed to their charge.” In A. D. 254, an African synod composed of sixty-six

*bishops* was held. Another African synod, of which Cyprian speaks, appears to have been composed of bishops, for he styles one of its ordinances "a decree of the *bishops*." See Cyprian, as quoted by Lord King, p. 135, etc.

At the Council of Carthage—A. D. 258—there were present "eighty-seven bishops, together with presbyters, deacons, and a great part of the laity." Cyp., p. 443. But it is hardly to be supposed that a "great part of the laity" of the province, amounting perhaps to many thousands, were actual members of the council.

A council held at Rome about the same time, respecting the heresy of Novatus, was composed of "sixty of the bishops, but a still greater number of presbyters and deacons." Eusebius, Book vi., ch. xliii., p. 263.

A council was held at Antioch, A. D. 268, about the heresy of Paul of Samosata, "in which a great number of bishops were present," (Eusebius, Book vii., c. xix., p. 303,) yet there were presbyters and deacons present: in the address of the council it is so stated.

I do not find that laymen ever had a seat in general or ecumenical councils or synods in the primitive Church; nor indeed in those more

local or provincial, after the second or third century. The Council of Ancyra, held in 315, was composed of bishops, and so was that of Neocæsarea held the same year, or the next; that of Gangra, about the year 330, by 15 bishops; that of Antioch, A. D. 341, was composed of 90 bishops; and that of Laodicea, A. D. 365, of "many bishops." These were all provincial synods. The first ecumenical council, held at Nice, A. D. 325, was composed of 318 bishops. That council ordered semi-annual synods composed of the *bishops* of the respective provinces. See Can. v. The same thing is found in the nineteenth canon of the Council of Chalcedon, the twentieth of Antioch, and the thirty-third Apostolic. The first General Council of Constantinople (A. D. 381) was composed of one hundred and fifty bishops; that of Ephesus (A. D. 431) of two hundred bishops; that of Chalcedon (A. D. 451) of six hundred and thirty bishops; the second of Constantinople (A. D. 553) of one hundred and sixty-five bishops; the third of Constantinople (A. D. 680) of one hundred and seventy bishops.\*

Bishop Stillingfleet quotes a decree of a coun-

---

\* Hammond's "Canons of the Church."

cil held about the close of the sixth century "against all lay persons meddling with Church affairs." Iren., 362.

If we now pass over the darker ages, and come down this side of the Reformation, we shall find the usage much the same as that we have noticed. In the Church of England a General Synod was held, A. D. 1603, consisting of "The Bishop of London, President of the Convocation for the Province of Canterbury, and the rest of the bishops and clergy of said Province."

This convocation framed and adopted the "Constitution and Canons" of the Church of England, by authority of the King, and was wholly composed of clergymen. But further, in their seventh canon they decree the excommunication of such as shall "impugn the *government of the Church* by archbishops, bishops," and the other clergy. Still further, the one hundred and thirty-ninth canon, treating of the synod of clergymen, says, "Whosoever shall affirm that the sacred synod of the nation, in the name of Christ and by the king's authority assembled, is not the true Church of England *by representation*, let him be excommunicated, and not restored until he repent, and publicly revoke that his wicked error." Here is a body of ministers,

not appointed or elected by the laity at all, but acting in right of their office as clergymen, adopting canons for the Church, and declaring it a "wicked error," justly punishable with excommunication, to say that this body of clergymen is not the "true Church of England *by representation*."\*

If the Methodist Episcopal Church would rid herself of the censure of not being represented, a short way of doing so might be for the General Conference to decree that "whosoever shall say that the said General Conference is not the

---

\* About the year 1547, "an Assembly of select *divines* was called by special order from Edward VI., for the settlement of things according to the word of God and the practice of the primitive Church." Fox's Martyrology, v. 2, p. 658. In the same year the clergy not only petitioned to be admitted into Parliament, but asked the appointment of a convocation to settle "such matters as concerneth religion as may be disputed;" and soon after it was called at Windsor Castle, and consisted of archbishops, bishops, and doctors of divinity, with Archbishop Cranmer at their head. *Irenicum*, p. 412. Finally the bishops were made members *ex officio* of Parliament, and matters which in other Churches are settled by synods, etc., in behalf of the Church, are there committed to the bishops and the legislature of the kingdom.

true Methodist Episcopal Church *by representation*, shall be expelled for his wicked error."

The Protestant Episcopal Church has a lay delegation in her Conventions; but there are two facts not to be overlooked in her polity: first, that the bishops have an absolute negative on all acts of the Convention, so that without their concurrence nothing can be done by the house of delegates; and secondly, that those lay delegates are not required to be even members of the Church. It might be a question whether a convocation composed of bishops—who can negatively control the action of the body; of lay delegates—who are not required to be members of the Church, and may seriously embarrass the movements of the body; and of clergymen—who are thus hedged in on both sides, is a more safe or more scriptural synod than one composed of a deputation from the ministry alone.

The Presbyterian Church has what is called a lay element in her judicatories; yet even her representation is not free from exceptions on the part of those who advocate a purely lay delegation; because her "ruling elders" constitute the only lay element in her judicatories, and they are permanent ruling officers, holding place by a life tenure. They and the ministry of the

word comprehend the entire constituency as well as representation of the Church. I am not finding fault with the arrangement—and in fact, for their general mode of action, I should judge it very appropriate and efficient—but I am noticing the fact that the most liberal among well-ordered Churches have not deemed a direct lay delegation, on strictly democratic principles, either necessary or advisable for the Church.

When the Independents of England addressed a communication to the General Assembly of Scotland—1641—on the subject of Church government, the latter replied, “that as well the execution of ecclesiastical authority, as the actions depending thereupon, belong properly to the *officers of the Church*, though their decrees upon matters of importance could not be executed without the *tacit consent* of the congregation.” Troubles of Great Brit., p. 77. So the “Confession of Faith,” (chap. 31,) on the subject of councils and synods, declares that there ought to be such assemblies, “and it belongeth to the *overseers*,\* and other *rulers* of the partic-

---

\* “*Overseer*,” another name for *ruling-elder*, formerly very common.



ular Churches, by *virtue of their office*, and the power which Christ hath given them for edification, to *appoint* such assemblies, and to *convene together in them* as often as they judge it expedient for the good of the Church."

Here it is claimed that this whole matter belongs to the permanent *officers* of the Church, as settled and understood by Presbyterians in Scotland more than two hundred years ago, and in America at the present day, nothing being assigned to the laity proper but "*tacit consent*" in matters of importance. "*Tacit consent*, is consent by *silence*, or not interposing an objection."—Dr. Webster. In a very important controversy which occurred in 1638 in the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, which resulted in a legal dissolution of the Assembly, by proclamation of the King's Commissioner, and the abolishing of Episcopacy and the Court of High Commission, by the Assembly, this question of lay representation came up in a very singular form, and on both sides of the question. The Assembly proposed to try and to depose the bishops. The bishops protested against being tried by the Assembly, chiefly on the ground that it was partly composed of lay elders, the admission of "laicks" being, as they aver, "con-

trary to the forms of all the Churches in the world, and particularly this of *Scotland*, where, these forty years, the presbyteries have never called any of these lay elders;" that "though the presence of *laick persons* was allowed at the Assemblies, it was to make remonstrances there, and to offer their advice with *respect* and *submission* to the judgment of the Assembly; yet it was an encroachment on the pastoral office, contrary to the Holy Scripture, the sense and practice of the universal Church, that any *laick*, not delegated by His Majesty—should have a decisive voice in the Assembly." Then was read, on the same side, exceptions from several ministers, complaining "that the laicks not having in former times meddled with the doctrine, but only assisted the ministers in the discipline, now take upon them to judge in the presbyteries and Assembly of the spirits of the prophets, which are not subject but to the prophets." In the same body Dr. Balkanqual proposed to prove "that neither the name or office of overseer or lay elder had ever been heard of in any council, or in any particular Church, before Calvin." The King's Commissioner—Lord Hamilton—finally resolved to dissolve the Assembly, "which was composed rather of a meeting of *laicks*

than of an Assembly, as of the form of their election." "For," said he, "what hopes could one have of a good issue of this Assembly, to which the ministers were deputed by lay elders, and wherein these elders have a voice?" Montaigne, pp. 30-36.

The Assembly, however, continued its sessions regardless of the interdict of the King's Commissioner, and after deposing the bishops and abolishing episcopacy, proceeded to "demolish the Court of High Commissions," of which the King's Representative or Commissioner was President. The final and chief reason assigned for abolishing this court was, that it "put the power of the *keys* into the hands of *laicks*, who had a voice in that court." *Ibid*, p. 40.

Here we find the Episcopal party protesting earnestly against the composition of the Assembly, because it had in it *laicks*, contrary to the universal usage of the Church, and the Presbyterian party defending itself, on the ground that their ruling elders were permanent officers of the Church, and not properly *laicks*. On the other hand, we have the Presbyterian party denouncing and abolishing the Court of High Commissions, because it had a *laick* element in it, in the person of the King's Commissioner,

and the Episcopal party defending itself on the ground that the Commissioner was "delegated by His Majesty, whose right it is to have a principal share in all Church deliberations and decisions," as temporal head of the Church, and hence the Commissioner was not in any ordinary and common sense a *layman*. Each party accuses the other of wrong, in introducing laymen into the synod of the Church, while neither appears at all willing to bear the unwelcome imputation.

In those different Churches there is nothing like making up a synod by a direct, unrestricted election by the vote of the laity. In the Scotch Church, and the American Presbyterian, the representatives are all permanent Church officers, by life tenure, the laity proper only yielding a silent or *tacit* acquiescence. In the Church of England there is now nothing resembling lay delegation, for synods are dispensed with entirely, and when they were held, the ministry alone composed them, and, in virtue of their ministerial office, were declared solemnly to be "*the Church by representation.*"

In the Protestant Episcopal Church, the representation is obtained by a more direct process, to be sure, but as the delegates are not required

to be members of the Church, it can hardly in fairness be called a *Church* representation. But at any rate, one order of the ministry, and that comprehending a very few men, has the perfect power to nullify and control the whole action of the synod.

But the most democratic of the Churches are far from placing the ministry and the laity on a common ground of equality, for none of them pretend to allow the aggregate laity a larger representation than they accord to the entire ministry, while the proportion of the former to the latter may be perhaps *five hundred to one*. For example, in one of these popular systems of representation it is provided that the chief synod "shall be composed of one minister and one layman for every thousand members." This appears equal and democratic, until we call to mind the fact that there were but two ministers where there were one thousand members, and that therefore the representative value of *one* minister is equal to that of *five hundred* members! Why is this? This is not democracy, it is not equality; and indeed the most liberal Churches that are at all regular, recognize the ministry as an *ecclesiastical aristocracy* as clearly as the nobility of Great Britain constitute an aristocracy

in the government of that realm. Is this position questioned? Let us suppose that the proportion of lawyers to other citizens is one to five hundred, and that the constitution of the United States provides that the Congress shall be composed of an equal number of lawyers and other citizens: could any one fail to see that the representative value of one lawyer is exactly equal to that of five hundred other citizens? or to see that such an arrangement would clearly constitute lawyers of the country into a real aristocracy? It may be said, and has been, that as ministers are employed wholly in their profession about Church affairs, a much larger share of Church authority should be allowed to them than to laymen. And so it may be said that lawyers, in their profession, are much more employed about matters of law and human rights than other men—indeed, wholly so—and that therefore they should have five hundred times as much power in legislative matters as others. Would this be satisfactory? By no means.

All parties then practically recognize the ministry as a Church *aristocracy*, and only want of information or of candor can induce a denial of the fact.

Now, the doctrine of popular rights and dem-

ocratic equality in the Church, as utterly condemns an aristocracy which allows *half* of the whole power to a privileged class comprehending not more than a five hundredth part of the Church population, as it does an aristocracy that claims the entire power for itself. There is but one way to reconcile this matter, and that is by acknowledging that, by the original charter of the Church, the ministry is constituted the nucleus of ecclesiastical organization, and the primary depository of Church power, according to what has several times been brought to view in this essay; or, as it was expressed by Laynez, at Trent, that in civil society the people are first, and make their government and their governors; but in the Church, the governors are first, and have to collect and organize the people into governments. Hist. Council Trent, 612.

But if this precedence be accorded to the ministry in virtue of their appointment and investment by Jesus Christ—as I think it must be—then I demand the warrant for allowing the ministry precisely *one half* of the whole sum of Church power as exercised by synods or councils. And no man can produce it.

May it not be that Christ intended the ministry to hold a larger or a smaller proportion of

this power than an exact half? Yet this is the proportion fixed on by those who claim to advocate popular Church government on scriptural and rational grounds.

We seem to have fairly reached this position: Christ has vested a special power in the ministry, for teaching and for government, and while *all* agree that that investiture is equal to one half of the aggregate power of the Church in what is called the law-making department, *some* are of opinion that it properly amounts to a larger proportion, and the *larger part* of the Church, in all ages, has held that there is no ecclesiastical power vested elsewhere than in the ministry, except as voluntarily surrendered by them to others, for the good of all.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## LAY REPRESENTATION—CONTINUED.

IN the Methodist Episcopal Church the General Conference holds the power of making "rules and regulations" for the Church. This conference at first consisted of the whole body of ministers; but these becoming too numerous and widely scattered to assemble together, a change was made whereby each annual conference elects a certain proportion of its own members as delegates to the General Conference. No layman can be a delegate, and none such vote directly for delegates. Yet, as the ministers who compose the delegations and the constituency are passed up by the laity, with the knowledge that they are to constitute the electors, and the representatives, I suppose the General Conference has better claim to be called "the Methodist Church by *representation*," than the great convocation of the English Church,

the members of which had never passed a lay ordeal. If, however, this claim should be denied—if made at all—the “impugners” of it will hardly be excommunicated for “wicked error.” If the Methodist Church holds, with the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, “that it belongeth to the *overseers and other rulers* of particular Churches, by virtue of their *office* and the power which Christ hath given them, to appoint such assemblies, and to convene together in them;” and with the good old Kirk of Scotland, “that the execution of ecclesiastical authority, and the actions depending thereon, belong properly to the *officers of the Church*,” she also agrees with the latter in the sentiment, “that their decrees on matters of importance *could not* be executed without the *tacit consent* of the people.” It is *consent*—so far as human authority is concerned—that gives effect to all law; and *tacit consent* is that which gives effect to most, for to a very large majority of all the laws by which men are governed they never have given any directer consent, nor had any thing to do in their enactment. And it is not only important, generally, but it is literally true, that “without the *tacit consent* of the people the decrees of synods ‘*could not*’ be executed.”

Of this truth the Methodist Episcopal Church had a striking proof in her forming stage. At that date she was induced to pass very stringent rules on the subject of slavery; and though no layman had participated in their enactment, nor had any power to repeal them, yet the *tacit consent* was unmistakably withheld by the laity; therefore, the "decrees *could not* be executed," and in that instance the conference was compelled to repeal or suspend them within six months.

Now, if the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church *consent* that their pastors shall represent their interests in the General Conference, I suppose they are at least as valid and reliable representatives as men not members of the Church at all, as in the instance of the Protestant Episcopal Church. That the Methodist people have very generally given their "*tacit consent*" to be represented by their pastors is evident not only from the fact that the popular voice has not compelled a repeal of this regulation, as it did in the case of the slavery rule of 1784, but from the further evidence that there has all along been general satisfaction with the arrangement, and a very large proportion of the laity are believed to be its earnest advocates.

Large concessions have been voluntarily made from the ministry to the people, in the Methodist Episcopal Church; and much that was at first vested in the hands of the preachers, is now in those of the people, or is a joint investiture. These grants have generally been noticed in our examination of particular rights and acts of the laity, or of these conjointly with the ministry. Yet if it can be made to appear that further concessions to the laity—and particularly in the rule-making department, where none have been made—are necessary to the permanence or prosperity of the Church, and are demanded by the people, and not inconsistent with the principles of the Divine constitution, it would be improper and illiberal in the ministry to oppose the measure.

In order to come at the right of the matter, it will be proper to ascertain the business which synods have to do, and particularly that of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The business of a synod in primitive times was “the regulation and management of all ecclesiastical affairs,” the settling of doctrinal controversies, deciding appeals from lower judicatories, etc. See Prim. Ch. p. 136.

The Presbyterian Church teaches that “It

belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church; to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively determine the same." Confession of Faith, ch. 31.

According to the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is "to make rules and regulations for the Church," to elect bishops and other general officers, to receive and try appeals, etc. Disc., p. 28, etc. But upon the first named general power there are very material restrictions; one of which is that the General Conference shall have no power to change articles of faith or make new standards or rules of doctrine. Here the whole ground of doctrines is thrown out. It has no power to do away episcopacy or itinerant general superintendency; nor to revoke or change the "General Rules," nor to deprive ministers or members of the right of trial by their peers, and of appeal, nor to appropriate the vested funds of the Church to any other objects than those to which they were dedicated. *Ibid*, p. 29. Doctrines, morals, mode of ministerial action—by episcopal itinerancy, manner

of trial, appropriation of the permanent Church funds—all these are settled, and therefore not calling for action by the General Conference. This narrows the ground very much.

But now of the principal acts they have to perform. One of these is the election of bishops, book agents, etc. And as the office of the first is to exercise rule and authority directly over the ministers, and the office of the second to manage funds devoted to the use of the ministers, nothing seems more proper than that they should elect their own rulers and agents, rather than to have it done for them, in part or in whole, by others less interested than themselves. Another class of duty is to try appeals of ministers, to act as a court for the trial of bishops, and to inquire into their administration; but as it is contrary to the usage and canons of the primitive Church for a layman to become judge in the case of a minister—so destroying his right to be tried by his peers or equals—in all these cases the presence of the laity in the General Conference is not only not necessary to the ends of justice, but their acting would seem rather to be subversive of the ends of justice.

The formation of annual conferences, adjusting conference boundaries, regulating affairs per-

taining to itinerancy, missionary operations, etc., are all departments of action with which the laity cannot be supposed to be familiar, and in which they cannot have the direct interest of the ministry.

In financial and educational matters, the laity may be presumed to be both informed and deeply interested; and if it could be shown that these interests would be materially promoted by their more direct aid and coöperation, and that they generally desired it, I see no prohibition in the sacred constitution that would conflict with such arrangement.

If our reasoning on the subject be nearly right, then we find in things pertaining to Church government four classes: in the *first*, both ministers and laymen are prohibited from action; in the *second*, the laity are properly prohibited, because the matters therein are committed by the Divine commission, or by clear implication and the fitness of things, to the ministry; in the *third*, the laity are presumed not to have the necessary nearness of relation to the subjects in duty and direct interest, nor the facilities nor motives for becoming well informed concerning them, and hence not properly qualified to act authoritatively respecting them; in the *fourth*,

it is believed that the *negative* qualification for acting for the Church is possessed by the laity—the absence of prohibition—and also the affirmative one of direct personal interest. Yet there is no department of this whole subject in which the laity seem to be placed in a relation of direct responsibility, or under a positive obligation of duty to attend to them, as ministers, for example, are under bonds of duty to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of religion. There seems to be no prohibition to their coöperation with the ministry in this class of matters, yet there is no positive obligation resting on them so to do. In this state of the case, it would appear that the question must be settled by Christian expediency.

An act that is *expedient* is one which is not *unlawful*, on the one hand, and not *obligatory* on the other. Yet a thing may be lawful and not obligatory, and still not expedient. So Paul found certain things “lawful, but not expedient.” Expedience implies “fitness, or suitability to effect the purpose intended; propriety under the particular circumstances of the case.”—Dr. Webster. “*Expedient, essential, and requisite* are modes of relative *necessity*; the expedience of a thing is a matter of discretion and



calculation, and, therefore, not so self-evidently *necessary* as many things which we so denominate."—Crabbe's Synonyms. To render a measure expedient, it must be not only lawful, but—though not bindingly obligatory—must also possess fitness and suitableness, and promise benefit or advantage, and these in such clearness as to make the adoption of the measure in a sense *necessary*—using the last term in a meaning a shade stronger than that which presents a thing as simply *proper*. Now does such an expediency call for the introduction of a lay delegation into the General Conference, in such a manner as to participate in that class of action in which their claims appear much clearer than in any other?

On this question I do not feel the zeal of a partisan or a pledged advocate, but am only desirous to come at the truth. I have not such firm confidence in my own conclusions as to feel uncharitable toward those who may reach different ones.

It is thought by some that such an arrangement would tend to bring the ministry and laity into greater nearness and sympathy with each other, and to bring the latter to feel a directer responsibility and deeper interest in the opera-

tions and prosperity of the Church. And I am not prepared to say that such would not be the effect, at least to some extent; though the results of experiments in this line, so far as I have had opportunity to observe them, have not realized fully the expectations of their friends.

On the other side, it must be admitted that there are difficulties in the way of introducing a lay element into the supreme synod of a Church so purely militant, aggressive, and missionary in its modes of operation as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Could I believe it proper to abandon the itinerant mode of operation, I should see no serious obstacle in the way of a lay delegation in the General Conference, under the restrictions intimated above; but it has grown into a proverb among Methodists, that "local men have local views," and many friends of an efficient itinerancy suppose the introduction of local men—men not itinerant—would tend to the introduction of local views and a local policy. How far such effect might be guarded against by restricting lay action to the only department that seems proper for laymen, may be a question.

Again, it is argued that so great a change could not be made without material inconvenience and a breaking up of long-settled usages,

productive more or less of bad effects. This is no doubt true; yet if the certain good effects of the measure were such as decidedly to overbalance the bad, the argument under notice would be neutralized by that fact. But such a fact must be come at by observation, reasoning, or experiment. *Observation* of the results of such experiments in churches operating by an itinerant ministry, would not go far to prove the advantages of the plan in question. *Reasoning* on the subject may lead differently constituted minds to opposite conclusions; and as to the *experiment*, this is what we hesitate to make until enough of probable good can be foreseen to invest the measure with, at least, a clear appearance of expediency. In Churches which admit a lay delegation, it is believed that they have neither been more successful and prosperous, nor more evangelical, than the Methodist Episcopal Church. *One* such Church is regarded as less vitally pious than most Protestant Churches; another has had more dissensions and divisions than any other; in others, what is called a lay delegation is made up of a grade, or ordained permanent Church governors or officers; and in none of these does the established mode of operation call for the same amount of energy, and

therefore concentration of governing and administrative authority, as the Methodist Episcopal Church. In *one*, where the experiment has been made under a mode of action similar to that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, its fiscal concerns have not been improved ; it is not believed that a better state of feeling subsists between the laity and the ministry, or that the former take a deeper interest in the prosperity of their Church than in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and that while a very large proportion of her effective ministry have retired from active service, or changed Church relations, those who remain are by no means rendered more efficient or useful by the liberalized form of government under which they operate. Reason seems to suggest, that as in a militant operation a greater concentration of power in the officers is necessary to efficiency and success than in civil affairs, so in an aggressive itinerant mode of ministerial action, a greater amount of untrammelled power is necessary in the ministry, to meet occurring emergencies, than is required or useful in operating by means of settled pastors. Indeed, this principle appears to have been fully recognized in the primitive Church ; for both in the apostles' time and the early periods succeeding that

time, the ministers who itinerated, not only had a large degree of power over the Churches, but also over those ministers who were settled or local in their action. So Chrysostom, in treating of the various ministries spoken of in Eph. iv., as “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers,” etc., says, that those ministers who were “dispersed among the towns and villages,” or, as Theodoret expresses it, “pastors and teachers”—the settled officers of particular Churches—were inferior to those who went abroad preaching the gospel, “and more of those going about and preaching the gospel than those settled and employed about one place.” Chrysostom 11. On this subject Bishop Stillingfleet says, that there were “a multitude of unfixed officers residing in some places, who managed the affairs of the Church in chief, during their residence. Such were the apostles, and evangelists, and all persons almost of note in the Scripture. They were but very few who were left at home to take care of the spoil; the *strongest* and *ablest*, like *commanders* in an army, were not settled in any troops, but went up and down from this company to that, to order them and draw them forth; and where they were they had the chief authority among them,—but as *commanders* of

the army, and not as officers of the troops. Such were evangelists who were sent sometimes into this country to put the Churches in order there, sometimes into another; but wherever they were, they acted as evangelists and not as fixed officers." *Irenicum*, p. 363, Am. Ed.

## CHAPTER XV.

## LAY REPRESENTATION—CONTINUED.

It is not claimed that the success of the Methodist Episcopal Church has materially depended on the fact that the laity are not directly represented in the chief synod; or rather, this point is not now up at all, for one party may appeal to that success in proof of the excellency of the polity, while the other may assume that under a different polity the success would have been still greater; but at least this may be said, that the Church has enjoyed remarkable prosperity under this arrangement, and a different one might be less successful,—at best must be looked on as an experiment of uncertain results, and which must be attended with no little inconvenience in making the change. After operating successfully for seventy years on one mode of government, that mode should not be changed on slight or very doubtful ground. Were the

polity of the Church *now* for the first to be settled, less conclusiveness of reasoning might render it *expedient* to adopt another mode of government, than would justify a change to that, from a different one long tried, well settled, and eminently successful. A change has, to be sure, been contended for, on the ground that though the present system was well suited to the infancy of the Church, its growth and consequent maturity demand a system better suited to the progress of the times and the present state of the Church. In reply to this it may be remarked, (1.) that the principles which prohibit a loose, latitudinarian mode of Church government are as immutable as the law of Christ, and are no way affected by the state or progress of society; (2.) and though great changes and advancements have been made, yet on the vast frontier of our immense country, the state of society is very much the same now as it was in the now populous portions of our country when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized; so that if the existing system was at all suited to the general state of the country and the Church at that date, it is about equally well adapted to a large proportion of the country and the Church at this date. How is this difficulty to be ad-



justed? Shall the wide-spread frontier be required to conform to the supposed convenience or preference of the more populous and cultivated parts? Shall one system be adopted for the cities, and a different one for the mountains and forests? Or may it be better to allow the present system to continue in force throughout the whole Church until change shall become more clearly necessary, or at least expedient?

Again: it would be obviously wrong that the laity should authoritatively control matters directly committed to the ministry, and in which they alone are immediately interested, or that laymen should become members of a court of last resort for the trial of an appeal in the case of a minister; and it seems highly inexpedient that they should be equal with the ministry in those matters in regard to which their necessary want of information, personal interest, and direct responsibility disqualify them for suitable action; to admit a lay delegation then equally to participate in all the departments, is what it appears to me the ministry could not consent to in good conscience and good faith; and it is questionable whether those of the laity who may desire a lay delegation in the General Conference, would be any better satisfied with one that should ad-

mit them only to a limited participation in the action of that body, than with their present relation to the whole affairs of government.

Furthermore, a change of polity, the adoption of which is not strictly obligatory on the Church, can never be made on grounds of expediency except in accordance with the very general wish, or at least consent of the Church, for such wish constitutes no unimportant part of that *expediency* itself. The original organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church was, so far as we can learn, in accordance with the very general desire and with the cordial consent of the ministry and membership; and without at least equal authority, an important change, such as that under consideration, ought not to be made; for, 1st, To make such a change under different circumstances would necessarily be productive of unhealthy excitement, dissension, and probably schism or division, such as should never be produced but under a clear obligation of duty, and to accomplish a certain good;\* and 2d, be-

---

\* The General Convention friendly to reform in the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held in Baltimore, November 15, 1827; in their memorial to the General Conference, say, "That there is danger of injuring society by injudicious efforts to bring about a

cause the change is contended for mainly on the ground of its republican character; and to make it against, or even without the desire of the majority of the Church, would be to put down practically those very republican principles so greatly extolled by the advocates of the measure. It would be difficult to conceive of any thing more absurd than to urge on a community a *popular* feature of government, contrary to the *popular will*.

In the great controversy on this subject in the Methodist Episcopal Church some twenty-five years ago, this principle was acknowledged by the leading authorities on both sides. A body of the "Reform" party, in an official address, admitted an "overwhelming majority" on the other side, but insisted that it was a majority of "uninquiring and unreflecting minds." Address of Frederick Union Society, 1827. And not a few of the advocates of a change, readily acknowledged that a large majority were opposed to

---

hurried reformation, we allow: the community ought not to move in any course of practical operation, only as intelligent conviction shall point out the way. All we are disposed to insist on at present is, the rationality and Christian obligation our brethren are under to give the subject a fair and persevering examination."

their views, and that while that was the case, the advocates of change were bound by their own principles peaceably to acquiesce in the will of an acknowledged majority.

Another very respectable body of the same class published to the world—"That a majority of the whole [Church] is still in favor of the present economy we have no doubt;" but they did not believe that their party had imputed this to *ignorance*, and then express the opinion that time and investigation would probably change that majority to the other side. Report of Cincinnati Committee, 1828. And after the friends of that movement seceded and organized a new Church, the proceeding was defended mainly on the ground that they were compelled to it by the excommunication from the Church of a portion of their number on account of the part they had taken in trying to bring about the change they desired. And this ground of justification was taken not by one, or a few only, but, so far as I know, by every individual and every body by whom a defence of that secession was made; thus clearly admitting that had no extraneous cause for a different course arisen, they would have been bound to remain and submit to the decision of the majority. Now I suppose no man

in the Methodist Episcopal Church, or who is well acquainted with it, has any idea that a majority of the membership, or even a considerable minority, are in favor of the proposed change at present. Suppose, then, that a very meagre minority of the Church should be permitted to carry their wishes into effect against the will of a large majority, what sort of republicanism would that be which should give the few the control of the many? If all other obstacles were out of the way, the man who would contend for a lay delegation to be adopted while he believed a large majority of the laity themselves were opposed to it, would, in so doing, proclaim himself the practical enemy to republican principles.

To the principle of lay delegation, so far as it is consistent with the Christian constitution and the efficiency of the Church's itinerant mode of action, I feel no aversion, but do not deem it, in any form, of sufficient importance to justify an attempt to press it upon the people against the wish of a majority, nor to warrant a resort to violent agitations and excitements—ever of mischievous tendency—to secure a majority in favor of the measure.

At the same time, I regard it as the right of all the members of the Church to examine and

discuss the principles of its government in a peaceable manner and a kind spirit, and to make any suggestions for its improvement, or to petition respectfully for any change they honestly and deliberately regard as for the benefit of the whole.

But suppose the people were ready for the change, and the ministry consenting to it: all difficulties would not yet be overcome. We are to suppose that the lay delegation, to be acceptable, must equal that of the ministry; this, at the present ratio, would be about one lay delegate to each presiding elder's district. Now, the preachers are well acquainted with each other throughout the conference, and of course with the qualifications of every ministerial candidate to be voted for as a delegate; but what proportion of the lay members in an entire district—comprehending frequently ten or fifteen counties and several thousand members—would probably know enough of the lay candidates to vote understandingly? Perhaps less than one in ten. And it is easy to perceive that the laity would be likely to rely much more on the ministerial delegate, whom they know well, but for whom they do not vote, than on their own nominal delegate, for the transacting of their business.

Again, getting over this difficulty, how is your General Conference to be organized and arranged? It is not likely that laymen, well informed on the subject, would be willing to enter into the composition of a body which has to try the appeals of ministers, elect and depose bishops, regulate conference boundaries, and like acts, nor is it likely that the ministry could, in good conscience, consent to such a perverted arrangement. Very well, but the lay delegates are to act in matters financial, educational, etc. But are they to sit as idle spectators until items of business of a particular class are called up? Would they consent to be *half members* of the body only—a sort of second-rate territorial delegates? It has, however, been proposed to remove this inconvenience by allowing them to *speak* on all subjects, but to *vote* only on those belonging to their own class. This will hardly do. Suppose the appeal of an excommunicated minister is pending before the body: in the lay side of the house are several lawyers of great ability; they are not allowed to vote in the case, but it is their right to speak, and such is the influence of their eloquence and reasoning, that they accomplish by their speeches ten times as much as their simple votes could have done. So that without

being members for the time being, they yet control and determine the action of the body.

Another remedy has been suggested for the overcoming of all these difficulties, and it is, to allow the laity a part in the *constituency*, but no part in the *composition* of the General Conference; that is, allow them to vote for delegates, but not to be voted for as such, restricting their choice to ministers only. One earnest plea offered in favor of the proposed change is, to stop the gainsaying of enemies. Very well, but what is their ground of opposition to our polity? Not that we withhold from our members the right of voting for ministers to represent them in the supreme council of the Church and to make rules and regulations for them, but that *ministers only* are *in* that body, and that they alone make rules and regulations for the laity. They do not inquire so much how the ministers get there, as to the fact that *they only* are members of that body. This plan, then, so far as taking away reproach is concerned, would, it appears to me, effect nothing. And in point of fact, I think it highly probable that such a change in the *constituency* would make none, or at any rate none perceptible in the *composition* of that body, even as to identical individuals; for, as the men best



known and deemed most capable are now elected by the ministers, it may be fairly presumed that in nine cases out of ten the laity would elect the very men to represent them who would be the choice of the ministers. So that by their *votes* the same men would represent them who now represent them by "tacit consent," and the gain would hardly be so much as nominal—outside of the Church it surely would not, for the old objection would be left untouched. I do not object to it because I suppose it would work any evil in its direct action, but because it would leave us under whatever reproach is now cast on us, and leave us as destitute of coöperating aid from a lay element as we now are; while, I conjecture, its tendency would be to superinduce in the minds of the now satisfied laity an impression that if they must have the responsibility of voting for delegates, and if this be their right, it must be their right also to *represent* as well as to be represented, and so lay a foundation for a new agitation that might not circumscribe itself to the boundaries of such a theory. Let the laity have whatever is strictly proper and profitable; but to disturb their contentment, and then attempt to satisfy them with unreal and tantalizing grants, would be an experiment of doubtful

propriety and success. It is rarely, if ever, safe to pursue measures calculated to impress a people with the conviction that valuable rights are withheld from them, and then offer them what they regard as of little worth in lieu of the great things they have been taught to expect. Nothing sooner or more certainly lights up a spirit of revolution.

In 1820, when few, if any, asked it, the General Conference instituted a Local Preachers' District Conference: soon multitudes of them came to suspect that what they had received was bestowed to prevent them from demanding more important grants—which many of them now for the first time began to think themselves entitled to. The new grant was stigmatized as a "Whale Tub," and the local preachers took the lead in the subsequent movement in favor of governmental reform, which resulted in the expulsions and secessions of 1827-8.

If the laity are ever to be directly represented in the chief synod of the Church, it appears to me that they should be the representatives as well as voters; and further, that the only manner in which this thing could be arranged with any consistency at all, would be to have a house of lay delegates exclusively, to which certain

business should be assigned, upon which they might take action, and on the concurrence of the house of ministers, the measures so brought forward might go into effect. I am aware that various difficulties would environ such a plan, yet fewer, I think, than any of the other "reforms" suggested.

But it may be worth while to inquire whether the talent and zeal of the laity may not be brought in to the aid of the ministry in those matters wherein their coöperation would be most valuable, without any revolutionizing measures, or any change of a disturbing character. In several of the Southern annual conferences an arrangement has been in operation for some years, which proves very acceptable and highly advantageous. The board of district stewards annually appoint one of their body to represent them in the next annual conference, and the lay representative so appointed is recognized as a member of the conference, so far as the transaction of fiscal business is concerned. This plan is rapidly gaining in popularity, and is productive of the most desirable results. Indeed, I have no idea that those lay delegates could be half so useful in the General Conference as they are in the annual. *There it is a matter of rule-making, appeal-try-*

ing, officer-electing, and the like: *here*, it is matter of action, and planning and preparing for action—straightforward business action, with which many of our laymen are most thoroughly acquainted. That the laity ought to be brought more directly into coöperation with the ministry than has been the case among us, I do not doubt, and for the present, I see no better plan than that of which we are now speaking. This involves no infraction of the Divine constitution, no sacrifice of vested rights, no revolutionary movements, and yet carries with it great efficiency and practical usefulness.

And so far as the Church's reputation with the world is concerned, I doubt not that the seeing of our prominent laymen actively employed every year in managing the great financial interests of the Church, in twenty different conferences, or, taking North and South, in say sixty conferences, would make a very much better impression on the public mind than their voting for a minister to represent them in the General Conference could possibly do; ay, or even their holding seats in that body once in four years themselves, where they would be much less relatively prominent in the public eye than in the annual conferences.

Furthermore, qualified laymen may be readily enough found who are willing to travel to their own respective annual conferences—a distance of twenty-five, fifty, or one hundred miles—and devote a few days to the business of the Church; but it might be a little more difficult to find laymen of the first order of talent willing to travel to a General Conference—a distance of two hundred, four hundred, or six hundred miles—and devote five or six weeks of their valuable time to affairs of the Church without compensation, and to the large prejudice of their private interests at home. If a minister spends forty or fifty days in attending a General Conference, it is but a part of his regular business, and his time and salary go on as if he were at home; but if a lawyer, a merchant, a physician, or an artisan—whose time is worth two hundred dollars a month—attend the same conference, he sustains a heavy loss, such as few men would feel it their duty to incur.

The subject might be presented in various other phases, and those already brought to view might be greatly enlarged on; but I wish not to fatigue the reader with tedious details, and rather aim at presenting suggestive elements of thought

than at exhausting the arguments on the several topics brought under notice.

I have not intended to write in a spirit of controversy, to carry a point in argument, as a partisan; but have endeavored to investigate the subject in a spirit of candor and charity, without any motive or feeling that a good conscience could not approve—living and dying—or any expression that could give just ground of offence to any follower of Christ, be his opinions what they may. And in this I have had an object beyond myself: if my essay should be read, I desire that the reader should *think candidly* and *feel kindly* while examining the subject, and knew no better mode of securing this very desirable result, than to write with the feelings I wished the reader to possess while following my train of thought. It is a tendency of human nature to be more violent and uncharitable in the discussion of subjects respecting which God has revealed little or nothing, than in any other, and as this is one of that class of subjects, it has ever been a dangerous one to handle, and without the exercise of great charity, it never fails to defile the sacrifice, in a bitter contention about the form and fashion of the altar. When we recollect that even since the Reformation,

rivers of blood have flowed in Protestant strifes and wars about Church government ; that in the fierce wars of the seventeenth century between English Episcopacy and Scotch Presbyterianism, professed followers of Christ became wholesale butchers of each other on account of an honest difference of opinion about Church government, it becomes us to approach this subject with the spirit of Christian kindness. For the loss of this excellent blessing, no imaginary nor even real improvement in forms of government can at all compensate. A vivid recollection of the bitter fruits of an intemperate controversy on this subject in the Methodist Episcopal Church a quarter of a century ago, causes the writer to feel painfully apprehensive for the results of a renewed attempt to bring on a contest.

The free right of thought and expression on this subject is claimed, and is readily conceded ; but the danger is farther along : a partisan of ability takes his position with confidence, but finding a large majority opposed to his views, pities their blindness, and zealously labors to convince them of ignorance and error, and so bring round the majority to his side : in his zeal he is uncharitable in his expressions toward those of opposite views, and so both steeps his

own soul in the spirit of strife, and superinduces a like temper on the part of those he opposes. Now, whatever may be the result with regard to changes or modifications of the government, charity, the crowning grace, is gone, and the loss is much more than the gain can be.

If enlightened Church members generally should demand any admissible modification of the government of the Church, and especially if done in the spirit of the gospel, I should not fear the result, for the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church have made many concessions in favor of the laity, and would, under such circumstances, it can hardly be doubted, be willing to do whatever was proper and lawful; but if self-constituted leaders are to set about convincing the people that they are ignorant of their own rights, and so go to making a party and to manufacturing a *public opinion* for the people, the matter being taken hold of at the wrong place and in the wrong way, must produce mischief inevitably. All denunciations of existing authority, all appeals to pride and passion, all uncharitableness of expression, should be discountenanced firmly by the people themselves. Let them examine the government, carefully, calmly, and in the fear of God; in the light of reason,



of Scripture, and the fitness of things—rather than by models, civil or ecclesiastical, that have no relation in character and objects with our Church; and then, if they see where it could, in their opinion, be improved, no reasonable man has any objection to their giving a temperate expression of their views, and they will meet a candid hearing from the ministry and the people. The Church has nothing to lose by such an examination of her polity. But let us avoid unwholesome excitements: they are to be dreaded as a moral pestilence.

If our people, voluntarily, and from conviction, desire a change, they will soon find means of making their wishes understood. Till then it is hardly necessary to give ourselves much trouble on the subject of their rights, as if they were not of age to speak for themselves. It is the right of the people to make known their wants and wishes, and this they sufficiently understand; and it is the duty of the ministry, according to the tenor of their solemn ordination vows, “as much as in them lieth, to maintain and set forward *quietness, peace, and love* among all Christian people, and especially among those committed to their charge.” Let this be kept in mind, and it may tend to the promotion

of the work of righteousness and peace, quietness and assurance.

And whatever diversities of opinion may obtain, may the Head of the Church enable us to “keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of *peace!*”

THE END.



# PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

---

**THE HEBREW MISSIONARY:** Essays, Exegetical and Practical, on the Book of Jonah. By the Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D. 18mo., pp. 242. Price 40 cts.

This book is a valuable contribution to our Church literature—it exhibits great research, and abounds in eloquent passages and valuable reflections. The engravings and maps illustrative of Nineveh, as brought to light by Layard and others, add great interest to the work.

---

**HOME; OR THE WAY TO MAKE HOME HAPPY.** By the Rev. David Hay. With an Introduction by the Rev. Alfred Barrett. Price 30 cts.

The author, as well as his endorser, is an estimable Wesleyan minister in England. His treatise ought to be in every *home* where the English language is spoken.

---

**MEMOIRS OF THE REV. THOMAS SPENCER,** of Liverpool. By Thomas Raffles, LL.D., his Successor in the Pastoral Office. Price 30 cts.

A beautiful narrative of the brief and brilliant career of a lovely young minister, who was drowned in the Mersey.

---

**FRANK NETHERTON; or, the Talisman.** Price 40 cts

The principal character of this work is beautifully drawn, and in it a boy's religion is charmingly described.

---

**LESSONS FROM NATURE:** in Six Narratives. By the Author of "The Week." Price 40 cts.

A revised edition of one of Mrs. Cheap's engaging and instructive volumes.

---

**WONDERS OF ORGANIC LIFE.** Price 35 cts.

The phenomena of organic life, in numerous particulars, are happily brought to view in this admirable volume.

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.

---

### **LIFE AND TIMES OF LEO THE TENTH.** Price 30 cts.

A competent pen, like that which produced this volume, could scarcely fail to make an interesting book on such a theme as this.

---

### **LIFE AND TIMES OF CHARLEMAGNE.** Price 30 cts.

It contains as much information concerning the great Charles and his times as one might desire.

---

### **THE CRUSADES.** Price 40 cts.

A concise, judicious history of the *holy wars*.

---

### **ILLUSTRATIONS OF LYING IN ALL ITS BRANCHES.**

By Amelia Opie. Price 45 cts.

A cheap and handsome edition of this great classic.

---

### **SKETCHES FOR YOUTH.** By Cæsar Malan. Price 25 cts.

### **FANNY, THE FLOWER-GIRL; and the Infant's Prayer.**

By Selina Bunbury. Price 20 cts.

### **CONVENIENT FOOD.** Price 20 cts.

The foregoing are narratives for the little folks, equally useful and entertaining.

---

### **THE CLAREMONT TALES; or, Illustrations of the Beatitudes.** Price 30 cts.

These popular tales occupy a high rank in the species of religious literature to which they belong.

---

### **BOATMAN'S DAUGHTER: A Narrative for the Learned and Unlearned.** By Alfred Barrett. 18mo., pp. 132. Price 30 cts.

Good judges have assigned this book a place with the "Dairyman's Daughter"—a sufficient recommendation. It is adorned with a handsome Frontispiece.

---

### **THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS FROM THIS WORLD TO THAT WHICH IS TO COME.** Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream. By John Bunyan. New edition, with a Biographical Introduction by Thomas O. Summers, D.D., and handsome illustrations. 18mo. In two Parts. Part I., pp. 272. Part II., pp. 242.

This Christian classic is presented in a very elegant dress. The two parts are bound in separate volumes, for the convenience of Sunday-school libraries. Price 30 cts. per volume. It is also bound in one volume, pp. 514. Price 60 cts.

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.

---

### THE CHRISTIAN FATHER'S PRESENT TO HIS CHILDREN. By J. A. James. Price 50 cts.

This work is written in a graceful style, and is full of excellent suggestions, cautions, and counsels. A few editorial notes and corrections have been made where the author's theological views appeared to be defective, and inconsistent with the general strain of the volume.

---

### PLANTS AND TREES OF SCRIPTURE. Price 30 cts.

In revising this work, the editor has arranged the subjects in alphabetical order, and illustrated the letter-press by a great many elegant engravings, executed expressly for this edition.

---

### GLIMPSES OF THE DARK AGES. Price 35 cts.

---

### THE WORLD OF WATERS. By Fanny Osborne. With illustrations. Two vols. 18mo., pp. 186, 224. Price 70 cts.

A couple of fascinating and instructive volumes. The tales and narratives beguile, like sailors' yarns, the voyage over the world of waters. The descriptions and anecdotes blend the charm of romance with the credibility of truth. The illustrations are superb.

---

### MEMOIR OF JOHN HUSS. Price 30 cts.

---

### ANCIENT BRITISH CHURCH. Price 30 cts.

---

### FAMILY GOVERNMENT. By Bishop Andrew. Price 30 cts.

---

### BEREAVED PARENTS CONSOLED. By the Rev. John Thornton. Carefully revised: with an Introduction and Selection of Lyrics for the Bereaved. By T. O. Summers, D.D. 18mo., pp. 144. Price, full gilt, 40 cts.; in extra binding, 75 cts.; gilt backs, 30 cts.—24mo., pp. 144. Price, in muslin, 25 cts.

This is an elegant volume. Its contents are adapted to administer comfort to the Jacobs and Rachels who weep for their children because they are not. They will scarcely "refuse to be comforted" by the consolatory topics so judiciously presented in this excellent work.

---

### THE STEAM ENGINE. Edited by Thomas O. Summers, D.D. 18mo., pp. 188. Price 30 cts.

A capital companion in a steamboat or car.

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.

---

### **THE LIFE OF THE REV. JOHN W. DE LA FLECHERE**

Compiled from the Narrative of the Rev. Mr. Wesley; the Biographical Notes of the Rev. Mr. Gilpin; from his own Letters, and other authentic Documents, many of which were never before published. By Joseph Benson. Price 65 cts.

### **THE LIFE OF MRS. MARY FLETCHER, Consort and Relict of Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, Salop. Compiled from her Journal, and other authentic Documents. By Henry Moore. Price 70 cts.**

Cheap and convenient editions of these two Methodist classics.

---

### **STORIES FOR VILLAGE LADS. By the Author of "Stories of Schoolboys," "Frank Harrison," etc. Price 35 cts.**

### **STORIES OF SCHOOLBOYS. By the Author of "Stories for Village Lads." Price 30 cts.**

These "lads" and "boys" are English; but we can find a great many like them in the United States, though one seldom meets with such capital stories as these *for* them and *of* them.

---

### **ST. PETER'S CHAIN OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. By the Rev. C. D. Oliver, of the Alabama Conference. Price 40 cents.**

An edifying treatise, based on 2 Pet. i. 5-7.

---

### **CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: By Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S. Selected from his published and unpublished Writings, and systematically arranged. With a Life of the Author. By Samuel Dunn. Price 75 cts.**

A carefully revised edition of this great work.

---

### **THE GREAT SUPPER NOT CALVINISTIC; being a Reply to the Rev. Dr. Fairchild's Discourses on the Parable of the Great Supper. By Leroy M. Lee, D.D. Price 50 cts.**

There is no mincing the matter in this sturdy volume. Even-handed justice is dealt out to Dr. Fairchild, with his aiders and abettors; and the gospel of the grace of God is triumphantly defended from their Calvinistic imputations.





GTU Library  
2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.

## LIBRARY RULES

GTU LIBRARY



3 2400 00584 1857

1. No book without be  
Borrowers  
done to th  
sion and are expected to make good on  
losses.
2. (a) **Reserve Books** may be borrowed for a period of two hours. In case no call has been made in the interval, books may be renewed for a second two hours.  
(b) Reserve books taken at 10 p.m. Mondays to Fridays are due at 9 o'clock the next morning. A reserve book taken from the library at 12 m. Saturday is due at 9 a.m. the following Monday.
3. Books not on reserve may be drawn from the library for two weeks and may be renewed once for the same period, except one-day books.
4. A fine of five cents a day will be charged on each book which is not returned according to the above rule.
5. **MAGAZINES ARE NOT** to be taken from the library.
6. Infringement of these rules may lead to withdrawal of library privileges.

UC83  
H38

27282

